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THE MOON GOD'S SECRET

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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"HE DREW HIS REVOLVER AND RUSHED AT THE YELLING HORDE."
(See page 58.)

THE MOON GOD'S SECRET

A TALE OF THE TROPICAL PACIFIC

BY

ROBERT M. MACDONALD, F.R.S.G.S.

AUTHOR OF
"CHILLAGOE CHARLIE," "THE SECRET OF THE SARGASSO," ETC., ETC.

WITH THIRTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARCH. WEBB

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
ADELPHI TERRACE. MCMX

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The Moon God's Secret

CHAPTER I

THE TREASURE OF THE OKAPITES

THE two men looked at each other; the first moment of excitement had passed and now they were cool, unemotional wanderers again. Their discovery—the mysterious golden treasure for which many daring bands of men had sought for centuries—lay before them. They were now rich beyond their wildest dreams, and the world to them was still fair to look upon, for their years were not yet burdensome.

"Is this a dream, old man, or are those really the lost idols of the Okapites lying there?" said one feebly, staring with half-doubting eyes at the group of solid gold images which rested in a niche in the rocks beside them.

"It is no dream," the other replied. "These

are the lost gods right enough, and that dark, swirling pool is the home of the dreaded spirit Urar. I'm thinking we are vera lucky men." The speaker's accent was slightly suggestive of far-away Scotland, and probably as he spoke his thoughts also were in that country.

"Then we can return to Britain with wealth enough to last for ever," cried the first speaker. "Oh, Jim, I feel there is something wrong in this; we have no right to rob the poor islanders of this treasure. How can we take away the gods they still hope to find some day?"

"That thought is troubling me a wee bit too, Jack," the Scot observed. "Gold is vera heavy, and I've sair doots that some o' these images will tax our strength severely to carry. It is a pity that the water course below isna' navigable for a raft."

His comrade made no answer, and together they sat down upon the wet rocks and gazed at their find, one picturing to himself the weird scenes in which the idols must have taken part in the remote past, and the other thinking out a method by which the treasure could be most easily removed. They were on one of the larger Caroline Islands, one of that count-

less array of "little lands" which stud the tropical Pacific, gleaming like beautiful red and white gemstones in a boundless sapphire setting. Far out over the luxuriantly-hued foliage of the tree tops which stretched away in graceful waving lines beneath them, the great coral reef which encircled the island scintillated in the sunlight like a band of gold. Against it the mighty rollers of the Pacific hurled themselves in ceaseless attack, bursting high over the jagged formation in dazzling geysers of boiling foam which shone out in the intense light with all the hues of the rainbow. Inside the reef lay the peaceful, sparkling, and translucent waters of the lagoon, deep blue in colour until approaching the shore, where they blended with the lighter colours of the shell-inlaid beach. From that point the virgin trackless forest-land rose in one long sweep to the vicinity of the gorge in which sat the two explorers, and then continued upwards in a series of undulations to the culminating ridge which formed the summit of the island. On the other side, down on the beach, was a native village.

But the two treasure-finders had no eyes for the beauty of their surroundings. They sat by

the side of a great pool fed by a cascade which fell from the rocks far overhead, and which leaped again from the rocky basin into the gorge two hundred feet below. Steep, damp walls rose sheer all round them excepting on the side through which the gorge had been cut, and its bottom was impassable even had it not been as far beneath them as the perpendicular walls of the ravine rose above them. Some trees, however, had found root in the face of the rocks near the bottom, and their branches, seeking upwards for the life-giving sunlight, hung over the dark pool on either side of the waterfall.

But the men had not climbed to their position by means of the trees, nor had they come down over the summit; they had come through a long, natural tunnel, and its end, hidden with tough creepers, nettle-climbers, and moss-like vegetation, opened on to the ledge partly surrounding the pool near where they sat. At the mouth of the passage they had suddenly found what many an expedition had set out to find—the lost treasure of the Okapites, a strange people with a stranger civilisation who had inhabited some of the Caroline Islands before the advent of white

men in the Pacific. Many were the stories gathered by the early Spanish traders of these people and their weird rites, and from Thursday Island to Tahiti, and from Sydney to San Francisco there was not a present-day trader who did not hope one day to go and search for the lost golden images which figured so prominently in most of the tales.

And now the treasure was found, and its finders did not appear to be supremely happy over its discovery.

"What will we do with all our wealth, Jim?" one asked at length. The sun had sunk in the western sky until its warm rays no longer penetrated the gloomy chasm. Somehow the men's spirits went with the sun, and a strange depression lay over their hearts.

"I hardly know, Jack. Now that we have become possessors of so much gold, I feel that, after all, it doesna mean all we imagined while we were hunting for it. I canna use it, and I have no friends to whom it might mean much. I almost wish we hadna found it, Jack, for now our partnership will be broken up, and——"

"Not by any means, old man; we'll wander over this little planet's surface together just the same as if we hadn't discovered these

chunks of metal, and were still looking for them. Like you, I have no one to whom I might give the gold. I had a younger brother, but I expect he's dead with the rest; at any rate, I've never heard of him since the old people passed away——"

"Maybe we could find him and make him take the gold," suggested Jim hopefully.

"I doubt it, Jim. He must be dead. He knew my address was always 'Hotel Australia, Sydney,' and I've made it a point of going over Sydney side at least once a year just to see if there were any letters awaiting me. He was an unusually promising engineer, I believe, and even had one or two inventions while early in his teens."

"I doot there wouldna be much use in dividing the price o' that gold among the population of Britain?" Jim put in. "A forty-millionth share or so wouldna be vera much."

"No, I suppose the real value of our find is not so very great after all; that ugly god will weigh about a hundredweight, and those smaller ones about fifty pounds each; at four sovereigns per ounce there can't be more than thirty thousand pounds value in the lot."

"You forget, Jack, that one or two of these

smaller idols are solid osmiridium and not gold, and are worth about one hundred pounds an ounce instead of four. Where it came from I canna imagine, for there are no signs of either osmium or iridium on any of the islands around this quarter."

"Not now; the volcanic islands which contained those minerals have long since been engulfed in the Pacific, probably water got in from the ocean through some fissure and then, steam being generated, the entire island was blown to fragments. But say, Jim, can there be anything in that legend about the awful curse to fall on him who first touches the lost idols. The great Moon God Urar was to claim him, and that must be his home in that pool?"

"We'll risk that, Jack, but let us get away from here with what we can carry at once; this place is no' canny since the sun has left it, and I'm beginning to think that after all we're not the first people who have discovered this treasure——"

"What do you mean? The natives say that whoever will touch it first will lose his reason——"

"I'm thinking some o' them have lost more than their reason; look at those bones in that

corner where the current has swirled them; old Urar has picked them gey clean——"

"These are human bones! Oh, Jim, come away without the idols. I feel there is a curse attached to them."

"Maybe, but I have just thought that if that brother o' yours is still on top of the ground, he might be the better o' some gold to help him wi' his inventions. I'll carry that ugly old god and you can shoulder ane o' his osmiridium satellites; we'll come back for the others——"

"No, no! we must not touch them. They belong to Urar!"

"They belong to us. No court o' law would uphold the Moon God's claim——"

"But they are mine! I saw them first! I touched them!"

"And you can have them, Jack, old man. I don't want them——"

"No, no! we must not touch them. They are mine! mine!——"

Jim turned and looked at his comrade. "Come away, Jack," he said soothingly; "we'll leave the stuff where it is until the sun shines in here again. My nerves are out of order too——"

"HIS THROAT WAS SEIZED IN A GRIP THAT HAD THE STRENGTH OF A MADMAN BEHIND IT."

[To face page 16.

"Ha! I know you now; you are one of the gang who tried to rob me!"

"Come away, Jack, don't talk like that! I am your old comrade. The gang is broken up now for good. Don't you remember how we tricked them——"

"Tricked them! Oh, I'll trick them this time, but first I'll see that you don't steal my gold!"

"Do come away, Jack——" began the other, but the words died away in a gurgle in his throat. It had been seized from behind in a grip that had the strength of a madman behind it, a grip which even under normal circumstances was as that of two men. The Scot half turned to his comrade, struggled feebly for a moment to throw off the deadly clutch, then fell loosely to the ground and lay still.

"Tricked them!" exclaimed his assailant, standing over him. Ha, ha! I should think so, they couldn't cheat me. But the great Urar is calling for those who would dare rob him of his treasure. I'll give him this devil to keep him going until I can offer him the others." He stooped over the unconscious body and raised it in his arms. "Here is one, great Moon God!" he cried; "take him into

your silent depths and make sport with his bones! You shall have many others before the full moon shines on your pool four times——" He paused; evidently his own words awoke some memory. "There is no moon yet," he muttered. "If I throw him in now he may be carried over the falls before the god comes. I will wait till the moon shines on the pool."

He laid his burden down again and surveyed his surroundings. The golden and osmiridium images lay where they had rested for hundreds of years; a motionless human body was stretched out on the ledge of rock, one hand hanging into the dark waters of the pool. The waterfall sang a demons' chorus as it threw itself over the rocks above and fell in one unbroken curve into the seething maelstrom, and then without a moment's pause launched itself down into the gorge. It was now growing dark.

"Yes, I know how to trap them," the madman muttered. "The German trader down in the village will carry a letter when she sails to-night which will bring them from the other end of the earth to feed Urar. I will go now and arrange." He started off at a run towards the cave entrance, and unheeding

the drenching spray which fell around, and ignoring the reptiles he trod upon as he did the silent idols, he plunged into its darksome mouth. Night fell, and the brilliant constellations of the tropics shone out, and, in time, the full moon looked straight down upon the pool lighting up the entire gorge with eerie effects. And, but for the roar of the falling waters, the night was silent.

Midnight approached and new stars came into view, then suddenly a man burst from the tunnel's mouth and glared wildly around him. "I am here, great Urar!" he cried, "and yet in time. Listen, while I tell you what I have done. You know how we were followed by those who would steal the idols left in your charge by the last of the Okapites. They knew we had found the clue which would lead us to them and they shadowed us night and day. They followed us to this island in a swift ship, and even dwelt upon its sacred shores, pretending to be honest traders in cheap mirrors, glass beads, and much turkey-red. But at last the natives under your great Chief Nogood came to understand their real intentions and they rose up and drove them back into the sea. This was a mistake your people made unwittingly, for

they would have given the bodies of the would-be spoilers to you had they known where to find you. But I have made that right now, and soon you will feast upon their bones. I have written to them in the name of their leader, whom your people killed in the fight, and told them where the treasure lies. They will come here again, therefore, great Urar, and then you can do with their carcases as you please. But they shall not get your treasure. See! I now give it into your own keeping, where only dead men can ever touch it. Receive thine own, great Moon God!"

With feverish activity the madman seized the precious images, and, one after the other, hurled them into the gloomy pool. Then a thought seemed to strike his clouded brain and he stood still for a moment. "Ah!" he cried at length, "I remember now. One of the spoilers is here; for him it is you are calling, I will give him to you at once——" His eyes searched the ledge where he had left his comrade. "Why, he has gone!" he shrieked. "What evil spirit has dared to rob the great Urar of his rightful prey?"

Only the song of the falling water and the echo of his own words answered him. With

perspiration streaming from his face he rushed round the ledge, but the body had disappeared, and in time he realised that fact. Then his mind struggled with an idea again, and he cried out piteously: "Blame me not, great Urar, he has been spirited away. But you shall not suffer. I am as young as he was and my blood as fresh. Take me in his stead!" With a wild, inarticulate cry he leaped into the boiling waters and they closed over him. Truly the great god of the ancient Okapites had exacted full tribute from those who had looked upon the treasure left in his keeping.

* * * * *

When daylight dawned a little trading steamer was dancing lightly on the swell beyond the coral reef. It was bound for Manilla with a cargo of copra, thence it would proceed to Singapore for many bales of gaudy-coloured cloth, and some cases of cheap imitation jewellery *ex* the North German Lloyd steamer bound for China. That trader was also the Imperial German mail and it carried a few letters collected from that Government's trading depôts scattered throughout the Carolines. It had one passenger, a gloomy, sun-beaten wanderer, who, despite the friendly

advances of the genial German skipper, persisted in remaining morose and taciturn. He left the ship at Manilla and boarded a steamer just leaving for Chinese ports. The trader carried only one letter from the Carolines; the address was "Singapore," written in an almost illegible hand, and it was unstamped, a fact not by any means uncommon among letters from the tropical Pacific.

At Singapore an official in the post-office glanced at the address, and then, after referring to a memorandum, scored out "Singapore" and wrote "London" in its place. The usual P. & O. China mail, in due course, brought the note to the world's metropolis, and the same night it was among the many letters consigned to Glasgow. Thus it was that at breakfast in the Grand Hotel one morning Captain Williams found a much-travelled missive awaiting him, and it needed not the presence of the large "5d. to pay" stamp to make him aware that it had come from some country outside the limits of the British Postal Service. He looked at it curiously and turned it over in his hand several times before opening it.

"I only know one man who wrote as badly as that," he muttered, still examining the

envelope, "and he was our old Chief. He pegged out in that affair in the Carolines, so it can't be from him, seeing the envelope is not asbestos."

He tore it open and uttered an exclamation of surprise. It *was* from the man he had thought was dead. He touched a bell and the waiter at once appeared.

"Has Mr. Gilson breakfasted yet?" the Captain inquired.

"No, sir, he is not up yet," the man answered.

"Lazy beggar!" grunted the Captain. "Go and tell him that I wish to see him immediately."

The waiter went off to carry out his request, and Captain Williams, ignoring his breakfast, read and re-read the brief note which had travelled so far to find him.

In a remarkably short space of time Mr. Gilson entered the dining-room, his appearance plainly showing that he had not taken much trouble over his dress.

"Well, you are a scarecrow," said the Captain, surveying the other from head to foot. "I suppose you imagine you are in a Pacific Island hut just now——"

"I am sorry, sir, but I understood you wished my presence at once."

"I did, but I did not anticipate seeing you unshaven, collarless, and—but we'll waive that in the meantime. It is quite impossible to make you a gentleman, and as you have destroyed my appetite already you may as well read that and give me the benefit of your comments." He handed the letter to the other as he spoke.

"Great Glasgow!" ejaculated Gilson, "this is from the old Chief——"

"Really! your information is most surprising. Perhaps you may discover next that he is not dead."

"We are not alone, sir; you may be overheard."

"Then don't cause me to raise my voice by your stupid remarks. That is only a boy over there in any case, and our words will be meaningless to him. Read the letter."

"'I have found the lost treasure of the Okapites,'" read Gilson, "'but cannot take it away; it is at the head of the big gorge by a pool half way up the rock face. Come quickly, for I cannot wait. A secret passage leads to it from underneath the temple ruins.'" He laid

the letter on the table and looked puzzled. "Is it genuine, do you think?" he asked. "It isn't signed——"

We are supposed to have ordinary intelligence, Gilson. Who do you think would give us the information if not our old leader?"

"But why didn't he say how to find that secret passage?"

"Probably he had been drinking too much bad fire-water and forgot," laughed Williams; "but I don't think that is a serious omission. I know the information is correct, too, because it refers to the very spot marked on the chart we stole from those two milk-and-water prospectors, Jack Wilmot and Jim Fraser. I suppose the natives will have eaten them by this time."

"I suppose so, yet I could almost swear I saw the Scot in this hotel last night."

"Your imagination, Gilson, is almost strong enough for a newspaper man. You might as well say that that youngster reading his paper so intently over there is Wilmot because his face happens to be cast in a somewhat similar mould."

"And by this smelliferous city, that kid is his very image!" cried Gilson, looking

over at the lad, who apparently was finding the *Glasgow Herald* very interesting that morning.

"And as he is listening now perhaps you will keep your tone of voice a trifle lower," remarked Captain Williams. "However, my mind is quite made up that we'll sail to-morrow for the Carolines once more."

"But the boys may prefer sticking at the present game; they may not care to go treasure-hunting——"

"They certainly are not going. I am tired of them and have no intention of sharing the Okapites' gold with them. You will go to-day and engage a fresh crew."

"But the others will split on some of our games when they find out we've left them, and —and that would be awkward." Gilson looked round the room and lowered his voice to a whisper: "We've carried on the business too long in Glasgow," he said; "the police are pretty keen on our scent."

"You may speak safely now," said Williams; "that lad has just gone out and we are alone. Let me tell you that our fellows will never know we've cleared out. I mean to get them safely stowed away in prison for a year or

two; they deserve it for bungling those last five-pound notes, and it will be good for their health too, for, really, most of them are becoming very stout."

"You'll get them put in prison?" gasped Gilson. "My! but I admire your nerve."

"Possibly; you have none yourself. Here is a letter to the Police-Superintendent which you might post as you go out—— Dear me! Where is it? I feel sure I had it with me. Ah! there it is lying on the floor near the door. How did it get there, I wonder? This letter informs the police that if they will call at a certain address at 3.30 this afternoon they will get a surprise, and perhaps some hundreds of five-pound notes."

"By Jupiter, they will!" cried Gilson, "and they'll get all the boys too."

"Yes, I have called a general meeting for that time and place. They'll all attend, and I'll go along presently and arrange the notes where the police are to find them."

"But will the boys not suspect us, and give us away?"

"Who would listen to their story even if they did think we had a hand in the affair? No, Gilson, allow me to manage things better

than that. You go now and get your crew for the Carolines."

"I'll send them down to the ship as I get them. You'll know them by their passport—a crook fiver," laughed Gilson, rising. "Those who are honest will turn up and show it at the gangway, and those who are not will, in all probability, spend some time as his Majesty's guests, for all Glasgow is looking for those notes now."

"Your wit is of an extremely cheap variety, Gilson. Complete your dress before you go out. I'll post this letter myself, later."

"You needn't be so horribly offensive, anyway," retorted Gilson, moving away. "I stuck to you through some pretty risky times."

"Yes," the Captain muttered as his satellite disappeared, "you've stuck to me, but that was because it paid you to do so, and your heart was too craven to allow you to do anything else. But your period of usefulness to me ends to-day, my friend; I have arranged that you'll not act the leech any longer, and I don't expect to see your face again, unless some one blunders."

Meanwhile Gilson had reached his room. "Williams is a cute one," he muttered, "but

"HE SPRANG AT THE LAD."

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I rather fancy he hasn't got a monopoly of that attribute. He'll get a surprise to-night. I have also placed some of the counterfeit notes in the room of that fellow who is so like that Scotsman, and informed on him, too. I am sure he is a spy——"

"Perhaps, Mr. Gilson; but, in the meantime, you will tell me all you know of my brother, Jack Wilmot; I know all your game, and only the information I desire will save you from the police."

Gilson swung round with a startled oath. The young man who had been in the dining-room stood inside his room with his back to the closed door.

"Who are you?" he cried. "Ah! I know; you are a thief, and I am only defending my property." He sprang at the lad as he spoke, a long knife in his right hand. Then, how it happened he never knew, he found himself lying on the floor and saw his knife flying into a corner.

"The days of strength and stupidness are past, Mr. Gilson," the young man observed coolly, proceeding to pass a cord round the fallen man's arms. "Science is the motto of this century, and—and as you don't seem

willing to tell me about my brother, I'll find him myself. I think, too, I'll get your crew for you; you won't have time yourself as the police will be here immediately."

CHAPTER II

BOUND FOR THE CAROLINES

Harry Wilmot rushed out into the street. His habitual coolness for the moment had deserted him, and he was a prey to many emotions. What a morning it had been for him! He had met a man the previous evening who had interested him greatly in his tales of the Pacific Islands, and who had invited him to breakfast with him that morning in the Grand Hotel, where he was staying. The great engineering firm with whom Harry was just finishing his apprenticeship had been forced, through adverse circumstances, to close down for a time, and, consequently, the lad, having nothing to do, had accepted the invitation. But his host did not put in an appearance at the appointed hour, and Harry for the first time realised that he did not even know his name. He waited, however, and overheard a conversa-

tion which was full of interest to him. Two men were actually talking of his lost brother; at least, they mentioned his name and that of one who, he knew, had been his comrade for a long time. When they mentioned the Pacific Islands in connection with them the boy was quite convinced that he had stumbled across men who could give him information as to his brother's whereabouts, for it was from those distant sea-girt lands that the last news of him had come.

He listened behind his newspaper and overheard fragments of their conversation. The speakers spoke at first in low tones, but their long immunity from danger had made them a trifle careless, and at times their voices were raised higher than was necessary for ordinary discourse. And thus the listener became aware that the heads of a gang of adventurers were only a few yards away from him, and chance words which reached his ears seemed to indicate that Pacific Island exploring was not their only avocation.

At length he rose to depart. He could hear nothing further, and evidently his friend had forgotten his appointment. But in passing behind the two men more words of startling

import reached him which changed his feeling of interest to one of intense excitement. He gained the door just as the Captain was telling the other about his letter to the police, and when he saw an unsealed letter lying just outside the room he felt no compunction in reading it. Then he made up his mind suddenly, and he determined to take a part in the game about to be played; for he was well able to look after himself, being strong beyond his years, and highly trained in the art of self-defence, as, indeed, all Clyde-side engineers are. But he was also a scientist, and in the Glasgow Technical College there never had been a more apt pupil. The mysteries of chemistry and electricity had for him an extraordinary fascination, and he had already invented many little contrivances based on his inner knowledge of these sciences. One of his latest of such was an arrangement of silk-covered wires about his person, connected in such a manner with a small dry battery and a tiny but very powerful shocking coil, also concealed, that when he touched any object with both hands, or rather with the foil-braided but rubber-lined extremities of his sleeves, the coil was put in action and an intense electric shock sent through the

body with which the insulated sleeves were in contact. Several times this electric paralysing device had been of great service to him when championing the cause of some of his fellow-apprentices against the more powerful bullies of the establishment where he was employed, and as it was no encumbrance to carry, and could be detached from or fitted to any of his garments without much trouble, he usually wore it. Thus, handsome, talented, and impulsive, Harry Wilmot considered himself easily a match for most men. He was chivalrous, generous, and pure-minded, and was surely a reincarnation of some great hero of ancient days endowed with all modern attributes.

After reading the letter he cast it back upon the floor and, standing behind the door, heard most of the two men's further talk, then when Gilson went upstairs to his room he followed him, with the result already known.

And now he was rushing down the street, objectless. "I have bungled," he said. "I should not have interfered with that man Gilson. I might have contrived to be signed on as one of the engineers for that mysterious cruise and thus got out to the Pacific where my

brother is, but now I have destroyed that chance; and how can I, a poor, friendless out-of-work apprentice, set out to look for him on my own account?—unless—unless I actually carry out the game of bluff I started. By Jupiter! I will. I know the Captain has arranged that Gilson will be trapped to-day even if he escapes from his room where I left him. Why should I not do as I said and engage the entire crew, with myself as one of the engineers——?"

"Stop a wee, laddie, that's no' the road to the Grand Hotel."

Harry swung round and saw the man whom he was to have met coming up breathlessly.

"I have just left the hotel," he said. "I am sorry I couldn't wait any longer. The appointed hour was nine o'clock, you may remember?"

"I do; but some things happened that prevented me from coming into the dining-room in time although I knew you were there. But never mind, we'll just take a car down to the 'Grosvenor' and have breakfast there. I want to talk to you——"

"Do you happen to know anything about the Caroline Islands?" broke in Harry abruptly.

"Ay," answered the man, rather startled, "I ken them vera well——"

"Well, I am going there. I have just heard that my brother, my only relative in the world, is somewhere among those islands, and I mean to find him."

"But there are over a thousand islands in the Caroline group and there is no regular line of ships trading to them."

"There is a steamer leaving Glasgow for the Carolines to-morrow, I believe; I am going as one of her engineers."

"Oh! Listen, laddie. I intended to propose to you to-day that we should go ourselves to the vera islands you have mentioned. There is a wonderful treasure supposed to be hidden somewhere among them, a set of idols made of gold and osmiridium, left in safe keeping by a strange people who inhabited some of the Pacific Islands before Europe dreamed there was such an ocean."

"But I didn't know you had a ship—and why should you ask me to go with you in any case? I have no claim to the treasure, and——"

"I havena a ship. I ask you to join me in the treasure hunt because—well, because I like

you, and as for anybody's claim to the golden idols, it is time enough to talk of that when they're found. I had the idea that we would just quietly slip away on the Anchor Liner *Columbia* to-morrow for New York. Then, crossing to San Francisco, we could catch the American boat to Manilla, or if there were not one sailing for some time we could run up to Vancouver in Canada and cross to China by the Empress boats, and from Hong Kong, say, sail for the Carolines in a wee schooner we could buy at that port. I am a bit of a navigator, you know. I have a captain's ticket."

"You have?" cried Harry, a sudden inspiration seizing him. "Then will you take an appointment from me that will mean us both getting to the Carolines?"

"An appointment from you? What do you mean, my lad?"

"Exactly what I said. I am looking for officers and crew for that ship which sails to-morrow."

"But I thought you said you were only an engineer on board?"

"I am nothing at all as yet, but I am about to engage myself. Will you be chief officer? The owner, I presume, will be captain himself."

"What is the vessel's name, and what is her tonnage?" The man seemed thoughtful.

"I don't know. She is lying in some of the docks now, and Captain Williams, her owner, knows where that treasure you speak of is."

"Captain Williams? Do you know him?" Harry's friend was certainly somewhat excited now.

"No, I saw him for the first time in your hotel this morning. We had no conversation together."

"Then explain; how can you engage a crew for a ship you have never seen, and whose name even you don't know, and whose owner you have never spoken to?"

"Easily enough; I can find out where the ship is at present by following Captain Williams this afternoon. The man he delegated to find a crew will be in prison then, as will also be all the Captain's old associates. He himself has arranged all that. But he expects that Gilson will have engaged his men before he is trapped by the police, and as he intends to sail away hurriedly without further communication with him, he will never know that the men who present themselves were

picked by you and me, and not by his accomplice whom he has betrayed."

"Michty me, laddie, your nerve is sublime! You're uncanny. I'll back you up while there's life in me. But how do you know that this Gilson will not have his own men signed on before he is caught? And why can't he explain things away, then, if it really is a trap he falls into?"

"Because he is in the hands of the police now by his own doings, and unknown to Williams, who apparently did not intend he should be until the afternoon. He sent for the police, to incriminate another man, and they were in the hotel when I left."

"But your reasoning is weak there, laddie. He can easily prove he is no' the other man."

"I don't think they will listen to him. I directed them to his room as I came out. All Glasgow is crying out about the uselessness of the police just now in connection with the discovery of the banknote forgeries; and when they find a man in possession of a bundle of these notes, they won't listen much to anything he says by way of explanation."

"He's one of the banknote forgers, then!" cried the man.

"He is. I heard enough of their plans this morning to make that clear; and I made certain of the fact afterwards when I visited him in his own room. I made one great mistake, however. A bad five-pound note was to be the token by which Captain Williams was to know the men when they came up the gangway. I should have taken some of these notes from Gilson, but I couldn't be a thief, even of bad notes, and from such as he."

"Laddie, you astound me! Do you know who the other man was?"

"No; it was some one whom he thought was a spy upon Williams and himself."

"It was I. Look what I found stuffed in my coat pocket this morning. It was thinking of how I came to be the possessor of so much wealth that made me forget my appointment with you." The speaker produced from an inner pocket a handful of five-pound notes. "If you hadna intercepted the police it would have been me whom they would now be hauling off to prison. Laddie, there's the hand o' Providence in this. That man's action in trying to get me blamed has given us the power to do as we like now. We can engage the crew, and give each man a fiver, as was arranged——"

"Hide those notes, quickly! Some one may see them. You surely have not been long in Glasgow, or you would know the suspicion that is aroused by the sight of five-pound notes. People have been victimised in all parts of the city; and if any one recognised those in your possession, you would not get a chance to explain matters. But why should they wish to get you implicated?"

"That is a question that canna be answered in a few minutes. I suspect they thought they recognised me, and wished to get me out of the way until they had got a long start. You are right in thinking I haven't been long in Glasgow. I only arrived the night before last. But here's the 'Grosvenor.' We'll go in and have breakfast, and afterwards I'll shave off this beard, and we'll see about the men for the *Electra*——"

"What! Do you know the boat?"

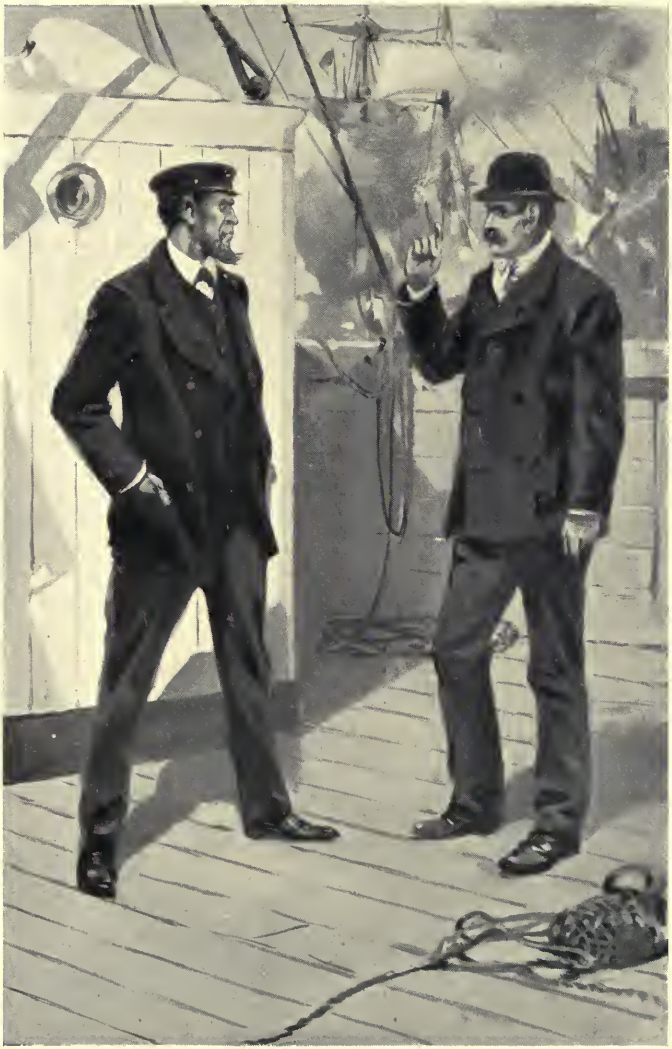
"Ay, and I know Captain Williams, too, although I don't think he'll recognise me. The other fellow was quite right in thinking I was a spy, for it was partly to watch their movements that I came to Glasgow. I have followed them round the world. But we'll discuss things inside, and then we'll take steps to be in the

running for the treasure of the Okapites, as well as friend Williams."

They entered the restaurant, and soon were doing justice to a good breakfast.

That afternoon Captain Williams paced the deck of the *Electra* with nervous steps as she lay moored alongside one of the wharves of the Prince's Docks. He had made his plans carefully, but the idiocy, as he termed it, of some of his victims might have upset some of them. He was alone on the ship, having by various pretexts got rid of those of his old comrades left in charge when the rest of the gang went off to attend the meeting on shore which was intended to prove their undoing. And now he was anxiously awaiting the arrival of the fresh crew, for he knew that the safest place for him for some time to come was the high-seas.

"I hope Gilson has not been stupid enough to go back to the hotel before getting these men," he muttered to himself. "The police would be waiting for him, of course; and if the idiot blurted out my name, there is no telling what inconvenience I might have to suffer. The fools have overdone the fiver game in Glasgow, and I shall not be sorry to get out



"WELL, MY MAN, WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

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into uncivilised parts again. After I get that mysterious treasure into my hands, I can easily contrive so that accidents will happen to all those whom I have to take more or less into my confidence; and then I can change my name again, and, leaving the *Electra* somewhere out East, come home to Britain and lead a life beyond reproach as a philanthropist and Church supporter. Hullo! here comes a man. I wonder if he has his credentials?"

He paused near the gangway, and awaited the approach of one who was evidently a sailor, just stepping on to the deck.

"Well, my man, what do you want?" he said, as the sailor stood hesitatingly.

"I heard you were signing on a crew, sir, and I came along to see if I had any chance."

"Who sent you?"

"No one, sir; but my mate, Bill White, was asked to come on board, and he told me I might have a chance, too. We couldn't find the gentleman who booked him, though, so I came right here."

"So Gilson has been attending to his work, after all." Captain Williams spoke to himself. Then, addressing the sailor, he said: "Come back to-morrow, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"All right, sir," the man responded, saluting and going down the gangway again.

He had barely gained the quayside when a smart, clean-shaven man ran lightly up the inclined passageway and saluted in R.N.R. fashion.

Captain Williams returned the mark of courtesy, then raised his eyebrows inquiringly. His visitor was certainly much superior in type to those whom he expected Gilson would be able to find on so short a notice. He looked a sailor every inch, and one well used to command.

"I have come to sign on as mate of the *Electra*," the man said, "subject, I was told, to your approval." He spoke with a slight accent which proclaimed him to be a son of the country of which Glasgow was the commercial capital. He was of medium height and of powerful build, and his features indicated a bulldog tenacity of purpose.

"Indeed!" observed Captain Williams. "Have you any credentials?"

"This." The prospective chief officer handed over a five-pound note. "Your agent has a unique way of testing a man," he added. "But I should think it will prove a bit expensive

if he tests the A.B.'s and firemen by the same method. A fiver is a big temptation to a man not supposed to be able to draw nice distinctions between thine and mine."

"Oh, my agent makes no mistakes. It is better to lose five pounds than have men of doubtful character on board. I suppose he questioned you well before he sent you here?"

"Yes; I had to give reasons why I was out of a billet, and explain several other things. Shall I go over them again?"

"Oh, no; it is quite unnecessary. I have faith in my agent, and you are henceforth chief officer of this ship. Kindly take the ship's papers from my room and get them signed by the shore authorities, and bring your baggage on board as soon as possible."

"All right, sir." The officer saluted and walked forward to the chart-room under the bridge, and the Captain turned to another man who had come on board. This person also saluted, and then silently produced a five-pound note.

"Well, who and what are you?" demanded Williams, noting with satisfaction that several men were now coming along the wharf with their kit-bags.

"Second officer, sir; I am shust off de Nor' Deutscher Lloyd *Kaiser Wilhelm*. They dispense vith my services because I am too fat."

"Oh, we'll soon remedy that. Go and sign on in the chart-room. What is your nationality?"

"German, sir; but I haf a British pilot certificate——"

"Doubtless; you wouldn't if I had anything to do with the Board of Trade. But never mind that——"

Another man had now brought up his outfit on board, and the Captain turned to him.

"Well?" he said, interrogatively.

"Quite," said the other laconically. "How are you? Here's my passport; it's a bad one, or you wouldn't see me here. My handle is John R. Hobson, and I am an Amurican. I am chief engineer, I believe, of this craft, if my appearance and credentials are pleasing to you. If they are not, say so in one word, and I'll clear out. Life is short, and I've got to hustle."

"You'll do. Report to the chief officer in the chart-room."

The American saluted and walked forward, and a young, pleasant-faced man stood before the Captain.

"I believe I am tentatively engaged as second engineer," he said. "I am young, I admit, but your agent was quite satisfied as to my abilities." He proffered the Captain a five-pound note as he spoke, but the latter, with an exclamation of disgust, waved it aside.

"Keep the filthy thing out of my sight!" he cried. "These Scotch notes are simply breeding-grounds for microbes. Report yourself in the chart-room; if my agent passed you, you'll do."

An hour later the *Electra* had her full complement of men, and steam was up in her boilers. Then the Captain called his officers together and said:

"Well, gentlemen, I don't know your names yet, but we've plenty of time to become better acquainted. Our destination is the Western Pacific, and as that is a good way off we had better start at once. Everything is on board, and our papers are all in order. If we succeed in our mission, which, I may tell you, is the collection of some native curios, I will pay all hands a bonus in addition to their agreed-upon wages. Our route is via the Horn. I shall take the ship down the river myself. That is all, gentlemen. Kindly see to your

respective duties, and remember I am very exacting in my requirements."

It was an exceptionally sudden departure, but no one cared; and as the shades of night began to fall the *Electra* swung out from the docks into the Clyde, and, with Mr. Hobson himself on duty in the engine-room and Captain Williams on the bridge, made rapid headway down the river.

An hour after she had left several detectives and a small army of plain-clothes policemen were blinking at each other on the wharf where she had been moored; but by the time they had finished questioning the harbour officials and stevedores on certain points concerning the ship, she was approaching the Tail of the Bank. Some one then rushed to the telegraph-office, and a long message instructing the authorities to stop the *Electra* was flashed over the wires to Greenock. That ship, however, had left the lights of the latter port far astern before any action could be taken, and when daylight came was dancing lightly on the Atlantic swell, heading SW. The men had fallen into their places as though they had been sailing in the swift little vessel all their lives.

Early in the morning the chief officer came

into the engine-room, where the second engineer was on duty, and, after seeing that no one was near, remarked:

"Well, Harry, I'm thinking we've carried through a piece o' work the like o' which has never been done before. We'll keep the old sinner honest in spite o' himself."

"It certainly is strange to think that at this time yesterday morning I was waiting for you in the hotel, aimless and hopeless, and now we are embarked on a scheme which may mean fortunes for us. But do you know you have never told me your name yet?" Harry looked up from oiling a bearing, and the officer's face twitched slightly.

"I'm down on the ship's register as John Reid," he said. Then, changing the subject abruptly, he continued: "We must keep our eyes open, Harry. Williams is not a fool, and he'll likely pick out from among the men enough cut-throats to do any dirty work; we don't know anything about most of them any more than he does, you know."

"Oh, we have the whip hand all the same. There's Hobson and two of the firemen, three of the deck hands, Schnake the second officer, and the steward—all these are our men, and

they will influence most of the others in our favour if anything happens."

"Ah, well, laddie, we'll play the game to the finish, anyway. I see your name is Wilson on the list. You did well to assume a name other than your own. But there's our breakfast gong. I'll see you later."

Day after day the *Electra* sped southwards and westwards. Soon she left the cold weather behind and entered the tropics, and in time ran into cold weather again near Cape Horn. After rounding the bleak and barren island Tierra del Fuego, the course was shifted NW., and again a genial climate was experienced for many days.

Skilfully navigating the island-studded sea which now stretched round, the course was altered almost daily so as to avoid the dangerous shoals and submerged reefs which Captain Williams and his chief officer appeared to know very well. The beautiful islands of the Low archipelago were sighted on the port side, and the outlying Marquesas on the starboard. Then, continuing on a WNW. course, Penrhyn, Victoria, and Phœnix Islands were passed, and hundreds of others for which the chart held no name. At length the

equator was again crossed, and one hot day Schnake came down from the bridge and informed Harry that the first of the Carolines was in sight. Two days later Captain Williams headed the *Electra* through a gap in a coral reef surrounding a large island, and announced that the steamer's destination had been reached.

CHAPTER III

STRANDED

All the men lined the rail to gaze upon the island they had come more than half-way round the world to find. For the last two days the *Electra* had been sailing through a maze of coral atolls, the low-lying shores of which were covered with cocoanut palms and vividly-coloured, clinging vegetation. But the island which now confronted the men was not like the others. It was much larger, and towered into the clouds until its culminating peak became lost in the misty heat haze. Clearly it was of volcanic origin, and the guarding coral reef which encircled it, but for the one tiny gap through which the *Electra* had passed, was built upwards from its sloping base many thousands of feet beneath the surface of the lagoon. Its sides were clad with dense tropical growths, which extended in ever-changing variety right to the summit; and

nestling among some clusters of palms, bread-fruit-trees, and banana clumps, near the beach was a native village, its quaintly constructed and curiously adorned houses completing a perfect picture of a typical inhabited Pacific island.

"Mr. Reid," said the Captain, as the *Electra* dropped anchor half-way across the lagoon, "will you kindly take the petrol launch and a shore party and see if you can get some fresh vegetables and fruit from the people of that village? Take some bales of coloured cloth with you and one or two of those rubbishy alarm clocks. Make friends with them, even if you have to promise presents of mirrors and glass beads, for it is necessary that we should have the freedom of the island."

The chief officer saluted, and at once ordered the launch to be lowered into the water; and in a few minutes, with the second engineer to attend to the engines and three men, the tiny petrol-driven vessel was churning her way through the sparkling blue waters towards the shell-encrusted beach. The men were in the bows and out of earshot, and Mr. Reid leaned forward, with the tiller ropes in his hand, and said to Harry:

"There's some game on, lad. This is not the treasure island."

"Isn't it? There seems to be enough pearl shell in the lagoon to make dozens of fortunes. Look down through the water—the ocean bed is simply paved with pearl oyster shells."

Harry was enthusiastic.

"Ay, but we didna come here to start pearling. The people of this island have a very bad reputation, and Williams must know that the treasure of the Okapites is hidden in the island whose peak you can just see through the heat haze away to the west."

"Well, we are more than a match for him, anyway. All the same, I know he has been going about a lot among the men of late when you were off duty. There does not appear to be any people in these houses on shore. I wonder where they are, and if they are cannibals?"

"I expect we'll know soon enough," replied Mr. Reid. "Keep your revolver in your fist and your eyes wide open."

"How beautiful everything is!" went on Harry. "Are all Pacific islands like this. Just look at the cocoanuts on those trees, and are those not cultivated gardens over there? This

place looks like an earthly paradise, everything is so quaint and peaceful. Surely even man cannot be vile here."

"Ca' canny a wee and we'll see," was Mr. Reid's comment. Harry had long since noticed that when his friend was thinking deeply his Scotch became more pronounced, and he wondered what was troubling him at that moment.

Shortly afterwards the little launch ran her bows up on the glistening beach and her occupants got out and advanced towards the most imposing-looking house they could see.

"I beg your pardon, sir," one of the men said suddenly, "but I've knocked about the Pacific a good deal, and I've found that when the natives of any village are not in evidence they are always up to something which means no good to visitors."

"Man, Brown," spoke the chief officer, "you are just putting into words my ain thoughts. I don't like this silence; they must have seen us coming in through the reef. You had better go back and stand by the boat, Clancy and Nelson; we must keep our back door open."

The two men mentioned obeyed, rather willingly, it seemed to Harry, and the others

continued their advance. They reached the mat-screened doorway of what evidently was the chief's house, a long wooden erection thatched with cocoanut fibre and mounted upon piles about four feet above the ground.

"Any one at home?" cried Mr. Reid. "We're sorry if this is no' your day for receiving visitors, but—— Hullo!"

The screen had parted and a stalwart native dressed in a fibre kilt and a glossy silk hat of the very latest fashion stood before them. A large bone ring in his nose completed his scanty adornment.

"What you want?" he demanded in English, much to the three men's surprise, for the Caroline Islands had never been a favoured trading group for other than the Spaniards when they owned the islands, and, since Germany bought them, for that latter power's ubiquitous traders.

"Good-afternoon," Mr. Reid said at once. "We have called to make you a present of some cheap mirrors and other things. They were made in Germany, I'll admit, but that shouldn't matter to your lordship."

"Um, you got blame plenty talky. Willyam Shakespeare no' think you eat good, but he

glad you come. He being pray for some white fellows blame long time, last missionary fat German, he no' taste good——"

"But we have not come here in answer to your prayers for a dinner of white men," said Mr. Reid. "We are traders, and——"

"It no matter. Me eat you allisame. Willyam Shakespeare tink he have young fellow first, he more juicy——"

"I don't think I am, Mr. Shakespeare," put in Harry laughingly. He thought the native was joking. "I am all bone, and I am sure Mr. Brown will taste better."

"Oh, Willyam Shakespeare he make soup of you, no matter 'bout bones. Willyam Shakespeare blame good Christian after this. He no' believe much in prayer before."

"Oh, you are a Christian?" cried the chief officer. "What English missionary has been on this island?"

"Willyam Shakespeare like Inglis missionary come make him Christian. German fellow no' taste good, him blamed salt an' old, an' hims religion no' sound. Big chief on Okapati Island tell me blamed good thing be Christian an' speaky Inglis. My word! He tell truth. Willyam Shakespeare he pray for

nice white fellows for good eat and here you come."

As he concluded he seized a huge spiked club hidden behind the screen and aimed wildly with it at Harry's head. But the blow never fell. Mr. Reid, who had been watching every movement of the chief, had sprung at him and the great Christianised Willyam Shakespeare went down before the onslaught without even expressing the surprise he felt.

"We are trapped!" cried the man Brown at that moment. "We are cut off from the launch." He spoke truly; hundreds of naked savages armed with spears and clubs had burst suddenly from the cover of the scrub between the three men and the sea and were closing in on them with fierce yells of anticipatory pleasure.

"Come on, boys!" cried Reid. "Charge them, we can break through in the centre. Shoot low so as not to kill." He drew his revolver and rushed at the yelling horde, his two companions at once springing into line with him. Strangely enough, they got through without any formidable opposition, the natives parting in the middle as if afraid at their approach, but closing their ranks again im-

"THE GREAT CHIEF WENT DOWN BEFORE THE ONSLAUGHT."

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mediately after the white men had gained the seaward side of them.

"There's some trick here," cried Brown as they ran; "why did they let us through?"

"Where's the boat?" gasped Harry. "We left it here."

"Ay, an' it has left us here," answered Mr. Reid, stopping abruptly. "Lads, we're trapped. Williams has scored after all."

And none needed to ask an explanation. Out in the lagoon the launch was just approaching the *Electra's* side, and already the larger vessel was moving slowly towards the gap in the reef. As the stranded men looked they saw the launch hauled up on her deck, and then, with a blast of her syren, which they knew was meant to express derision, she steamed out into the open sea.

Meanwhile the natives had formed a semi-circle round their intended victims and were indulging in a weird dance expressive of delight. But they did not appear to be in a great hurry to come near; evidently they had met white traders before and had learned to respect the magical powers of the little fire-spitting gods which all white men carried. They could wait, however, and by and by, if

they could not transfix them with their spears, they would easily rush them and sweep them into the sea, where the hungry sharks were already gathering in great numbers in anticipation of a meal.

"Of all the dirty tricks I've ever known this takes the biscuit," remarked Brown ruefully. "Marooned on a cannibal island and no tobacco!"

"Write to the papers about it," suggested Harry. "But perhaps Willyam Shakespeare will give you some. I see him among his warriors over there."

"For a kid you've got a fair amount of cheek," said Brown. "Maybe you think it feels sort o' pleasant like to have your bones picked by cannibals."

"No, Brown, believe me I don't," answered Harry. "I would much rather see Captain Williams' bones picked."

"I wadna think o' gastronomical feats just now, lads," put in Mr. Reid. "There's many a slip between the printing o' a menu card and the dishes appearing on the table."

"But it looks like as if we were on the table now, sir," said Brown. "I know that ugly old sinner over by that palm means to sample us. Look at his eyes——"

"Willyam Shakespeare!" cried Mr. Reid. "Your ancestors were crows, your grandmother was a horned frog, and your mother a sea snake; your warriors are only parrots, and you are a pig."

"Willyam Shakespeare's ancestors were the great Okapites," retorted the chief. "They were old when the white people were children. Hims mother was an alligator and hims warriors great fighters——"

"What a liar you are!" roared Mr. Reid contemptuously. "The Okapites were brave people; they only killed in fair fight. They did not come out in thousands to fight three men. How, therefore, can you be Okapites? Bah! you are all crows, and your children will be crows after you."

Probably the chief did not understand much of what was said, but even an ignorant Pacific Islander knows the insult implied by the word "crow" being addressed to him, and the murmur that arose from the warriors showed that they felt the insult keenly and would probably rush the white men to avenge it.

"Crows! Crows!" repeated Harry and Brown, perceiving that Mr. Reid's intention was to make them angry. They did not know

why, nor did they care much. The scorching tropical sun was shining straight down upon them, and they wished to make a break for the invitingly cool shade of the forest which covered the mountain slopes. The *Electra* was now growing smaller in the distance.

But the wily Willyam knew well that Mr. Reid's idea was to force a personal quarrel upon him, and by virtue of the old Okapites' law, still recognised throughout the Pacific, claim absolute safety for his friends while the duel was being fought. He would have liked to accept the challenge if only to show his prowess to his men, but Mr. Reid looked a very powerful man, and he had already experienced the strength of his arm. He meditated upon these facts, and the chief officer explained his intentions to his two companions.

"But he'll not step out and fight you," said Harry. "He knows we are in his hands without his running any risk, and you know you look powerful enough to frighten any two of his men.

"Yes," said Brown, "if it were you instead of the chief he had to tackle he might jump at the chance of glory, but he's not having any to-day. I move we rush the mob, just to relieve

the monotony; we're as good as cooked anyway——"

"Jupiter! I had forgotten," exclaimed Harry, stepping in front of the others, "I will challenge him."

"No, no!" cried Reid. "He'll accept, and then we canna interfere."

"You won't need to. I'll give him all he wants."

"You?" sniffed Brown. "I'm blamed if I know how a kid like you ever got a second engineer's ticket. He'll eat you in one mouthful. Let me have a shot at him."

"He won't eat me," laughed Harry; "and I say, Brown, I haven't a second's certificate. I never was at sea before. I bluffed Captain Williams for a purpose, and I'm going to cheat friend Willyam now also."

"I canna allow it, Harry," said Mr. Reid. "If he'll not fight me we'll try some other plan."

But Harry was speaking. "Willyam Shakespeare," he cried, "as my friend has said, you are a crow. If you have the spirit of one step out and fight me. If you win you may start and eat us as we stand, if you like, and we'll not fight, but if I win you must promise us our safety until we can get off your island."

"He'll promise anything," grunted Brown. "Lying is a virtue with his kind."

Willyam Shakespeare's eyes kindled. Here was the chance to show his great skill and at the same time prove that he was no crow. True, his challenger was only a boy, but then the risk was less, and his flesh would go well with yams and other vegetables.

"Um," he grinned, "you blame fool. Willyam Shakespeare, he kill you. You drop fire-pop?"

"Yes," agreed Harry, handing his revolver to Brown; "but you must drop your club."

The native threw away his ferociously barbed weapon, and yelling out his war cry, which sounded suspiciously like a Scripture quotation, he leaped at Harry. All gathered round. The spirit of sport is as deeply planted in the breast of a Polynesian as in a Briton. He does not always abide by the result to the same extent, however.

High in the air the native chief raised the lad, then he dropped him suddenly and a surprised look came over his face. Again he seized the slim figure and repeated the process, this time throwing Harry over his head. The

warriors shouted gleefully, and Brown muttered words under his breath. Mr. Reid remained impassive. He had just remembered Harry's tale of how he had overcome Gilson, and he had noticed the surprised expression on the native's face.

A third time the combatants closed together, but this time Harry got his hands over the other's wrists. For a moment they swayed, then just as the native seemed to be bearing the lad down under him by superior weight, he uttered a shriek and turned a back somersault, finally coming to rest lying on the ground.

"Good old kid!" yelled Brown. "Give him more jiu-jitsu."

Willyam did not seem to want any more, and it was with exceeding trepidation that he gingerly came up for the fourth round. That was also the last. Harry allowed himself to be swung off his feet, confining his efforts to gripping his opponent's head with both hands. At length he got the exact spots he desired, and instantly there burst out from Willyam's throat a series of frenzied shrieks and howls of terror. He ran once round in a circle, carrying his antagonist in his arms, and then, relaxing his arms, he dropped Harry, uttered a yell

which might have awakened his ancestors, and sprang into the air. His head struck the ground first as he came down, and he lay still.

"Blow me if I ever saw a fight like that!" Brown gasped. "Say, kid, what are you doing to him?"

"The fight is over," said Mr. Reid, bending over the native. "The chief will not fight again for some days. Harry, I congratulate you. You have brought us out of a tight corner."

Sullenly the warriors stood aside and the three white men passed through their ranks and plunged into the forest entanglements.

"Travel quickly, boys," advised Mr. Reid. "After a bit they're sure to come and look for us. They'll reason out among themselves that Harry had a god to help him in the fight and that therefore they are entitled to kill us."

"And that being so," spoke Brown, "I think we are entitled to help ourselves to some wild pig. I've got a decent hunger on now, and we haven't the *Electra's* galley within swim of us."

"Don't wait to look for food," cried Mr. Reid. "We'll circle round and down to the beach again on the other side of the village,

and run along in the water so that they can't track us. Hullo! where is Brown?"

"Go on, I'll follow," came a voice from behind. "I've found the back-door entrance to the chief's larder, and I reckon I'm not going to starve while there's corn in Egypt —I mean pigs in Polynesia."

And when he did come out of the house he carried with him an assortment of edible commodities that included a tin of marmalade bearing a Dundee label, a bottle of pickles from New York, a tin of condensed milk from Australia, and some other items whose source of origin was extremely doubtful. He also had a young wild pig already cooked, evidently having been intended for the chief's dinner.

"This isn't stealing," he said to Harry, as his load was divided among the party. "I left three of my buttons in exchange, and this pig would only spoil if left there, for the old beggar won't have any appetite for pig, thanks to you, for some time."

"But where did the natives get these tinned goods?" asked Harry in surprise. "I am sure no trader would care to land here."

"They probably raided the next island and took them," Mr. Reid answered. "Its people

are partly civilised, and traders call there frequently." He looked thoughtfully at the tin of marmalade as he spoke and after a moment, muttered enigmatically: "No, it canna be called stealing to take one's own."

Harry wondered at the words but said nothing, and in time they forced a passage through the dense network of creepers which stretched like a great web from tree to tree, and found themselves once more on the beach. The *Electra* was now out of sight. Entering the water, they travelled along the edge of the shore until at length Mr. Reid thought their tracks had been left far enough behind to ensure their safety for the time, and breaking into the forest scrub which lined the beach, they sat down to partake of the food Brown had provided.

And the afternoon wore on and the sun sank low in the western sky. A little stream of water gurgled by in the undergrowth, and its music was soothing and strongly suggestive of the land of forgetfulness. The three castaways slept. Thus they did not see the crowd of warriors who ran along the beach looking for the tracks of the bad white fellows who had somewhat disappeared without leaving any

signs by which they might be followed. The natives passed within a few feet of the helpless men, but the dense, cool scrub held its secret, and the slaughter-breathing creatures continued on their wild rush round the island. Others were searching the hill slopes behind the village, and some were preparing their canoes to sail round the lagoon on the chance of finding their prey on the other side of the island.

At length darkness enveloped the land and Mr. Reid suddenly sat up. A war-drum in the village was summoning the people to attend a council in front of the chief's house, and its dull, monotone notes sounded weirdly on the night air.

"Wake up, boys!" the Scot said to his companions, and at once Harry and Brown were sitting upright beside him.

"What's the trouble, boss?" asked Brown. "I would rather go on sleeping than start travelling again. We are just as well here as anywhere else, and handy to the village for stealing stores——"

"You should really allow your mind to dwell upon other things than your stomach sometimes, Brown," Mr. Reid said reprovingly. "It's

no' stores we're going to steal, it's a canoe. We are going to leave this happy land and emigrate to other shores."

"Tell us what to do then," said Harry. "I am ready for anything."

"And I am ready for something to eat," Brown muttered, "but let's hear about this emigration scheme."

"We'll visit the village under cover of the darkness, push one of the biggest catamarans into the lagoon, and sail away. The island for which the *Electra* is bound is only thirty miles distant, and with luck and a bit of breeze we might cover that distance before morning." Mr. Reid seemed hopeful.

"Let's start at once then," cried Brown, jumping up. "I'd give a lot to get near enough to Clancy and Nelson to punch their heads."

"It's no' the question o' getting back to the steamer I'm thinking of," said Mr. Reid, "but vera likely that matter will be attended to when the time comes. There are some heads on board I mean to punch myself."

They had now left the shelter of the forest and were walking along the beach towards the village. The night was very dark. Soon they came within sight of a great fire on the beach

in front of the village, round which the entire population seemed to have gathered. Willyam Shakespeare was haranguing them, a bandage of plantain-leaves round his frizzy-haired head, showing that the tribe's medicine man had been attending him. The zone of the firelight extended to the water's edge, and just beyond the flickering shadows farther down the beach were the long lines of canoes and catamarans by means of which the natives made raids on neighbouring islands.

Mr. Reid paused, and an exclamation of annoyance escaped his lips. "We'll never do it," he muttered. "We canna pass that fire."

"Yes, I can," cried Harry. "I can swim round in the lagoon outside the influence of the fire. I can easily push one of these funny winged contrivances into the water myself and come back in it——"

"You've hit the idea, Harry," said Mr. Reid. "We'll all swim."

"Not much!" grunted Brown. "I've got to attend to the commissariat of this little pilgrim band, and that means a journey round to the back door of that restaurant again. I'll meet you fellows at the Royal Albert Docks, or where the canoes are thickest."

He turned into the scrub, and the others got ready for a long swim, Harry's only preparation being to remove his dry battery, and strap it on his head, where it would be safe. It was a risky thing to attempt such a swim, as the sharks were very numerous in the deeper waters, but they accomplished it safely and landed among the canoes in the shadows beyond the fire just as the chief was concluding his lengthy speech. Quietly they pushed the most convenient catamaran into the warm water, and taking paddles from another boat in addition to those belonging to the vessel they had seized, they stood by and waited on Brown. He came a minute later, with an armful of assorted provisions, and while one of the warriors was delivering a speech exhorting his comrades to start out at once in pursuit of the white men who had dared to land on their island without being asked, the men in question pushed off into the lagoon with their chief war catamaran and almost under their noses.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANCIENT TEMPLE RUIN

"WELL, lads," observed Mr. Reid as they paddled swiftly over the smooth waters of the lagoon, "we've had some strange experiences these last few hours, and I fully expect we'll have a lot more before long; a book-writing fellow would be in his element with this little party. I mean a man who writes on what he knows; not an adventure story writer who never was out o' his country in his life, and who shoots lions and tigers in Australia, catches whales in the Red Sea, and makes all natives o' every place speak like half-educated American negroes."

"I hope you don't think I'm one of that lot," said Brown interrupting. "I only deal with what I know and——"

"Are you a book-writer?" asked Harry in surprise. "I thought you were only a sailor."

"Man in his time plays many parts, young

man," returned Brown oracularly. "I've been most things in my time, and I think sailoring is about the last thing I could shine at—no, I mean at which I could shine; I'm getting mighty particular in the way I build my sentences——"

"But it was I who signed you on, Brown," said Mr. Reid. "Your papers were all in order, and you have proved yourself to be a first-class sailor in every way."

"I make it my duty, sir, to master every profession I try," replied Brown gravely. "I started life as the chief sweeper-out of an office, but as the emolument was not sufficient for my somewhat expensive tastes, I forsook that occupation and ran away to sea. In the quiet and peaceful work of polishing brasses and of scrubbing decks I might have remained content and spent an uneventful life; but when I found that I was expected to take a hand in loading coal and nitrate at Callao, my dreams were shattered—hard work and philosophy don't agree—and I left my ship in Sydney one day and went up country as a sheep-shearer. I made money at that game and met some really decent fellows; but their language was of such a nature that I was reluctantly forced

to abandon the noble profession, for I did not wish my English to be as theirs although they were, apart from their propensity to lurid and sanguinary adjectives, the finest comrades I had ever met. Well, next I became a Member of Parliament for a district in North Queensland, but after having a fight in the House with another member who asserted that my veracity was questionable, I sought pastures new. I needn't trouble you with details. I roamed the world, becoming more of an Omar Khayyám every day, only never finding that contentment of spirit which he seems to have found. One day, I happened to be in Glasgow, and was just thinking about starting to write a book on my experiences when you, sir, sailed up and signed me on for this trip which has landed us here."

Brown paddled vigorously as he ceased talking. The boom of the surf on the outer reef was sounding loudly, but as yet it was a mile off.

"Ay, Brown," said Mr. Reid, "it is a strange world, this, and there are more parts o' life's comedies and tragedies played in the Pacific than the people around the Western Ocean know. Just think o' our friend Willyam Shake-

speare; he, I suppose, will be a sort o' comedian in our little party, and Captain Williams chief villain. Oh, you'll get enough to write about, Brown, and I'll promise you the spirit o' discontent that dwells within you will no' have very much time to trouble you. We're chief actors this time—and—and—there's the reef looming up ahead."

"You don't seem to worry much, sir, over the fact that we are practically adrift in the Pacific," put in Harry quietly. "I should have thought, were it not for your coolness, that we were in a fairly tight position."

"Man, laddie, I've been here before," said Mr. Reid. "I ken these islands brawly and a' aboot them, and I'm thinking that we're no half as thankful to Captain Williams as we should be for giving us a free passage to them. We were coming here anyway, you know, Harry."

"Is there anything on the carpet I'm not supposed to know?" asked Brown abruptly, resting for a moment on his paddle; "because if there is you fellows had better wait till I'm sleeping before you begin talking; I can't help hearing——"

"You are a man o' great perceptive powers,

Brown," Mr. Reid said suavely. "And I'll tell you everything I ken aboot this little affair, for I feel sure you're no' the kind to go back on your comrades in supposed misfortune."

"That is all right, sir; but kindly remember I'm only a deck hand, and there is no call for me to know things when it is inconvenient for my superiors to tell me."

"You've no superiors now, Brown. We're a' in the same boat in a double sense. Captain Williams, I expect, found you weren't a tractable sort of individual, and thus marooned you with us. He had his reasons for what he did, but he made a mistake, I think, for we'll be at the real place as soon as him."

"Where is that, sir? And am I to understand that we were sent on shore to be left there, purposely? and that Captain Williams had a special reason for wishing to be rid of us?"

"Would you believe it, Brown, I actually think he did want to dispense with our services," Mr. Reid chuckled. "However, I wouldna' wonder but what he made a mistake, for we're vera much alive yet and able to do a lot o' damage."

"But why should the old beggar want to

strand his chief officer, second engineer, and his quartermaster?" inquired Brown. "He'll be short-handed now, and he can't readily fill our places."

"Listen for a minute and I'll explain, Brown," said Harry. "But keep a look-out for that reef while I am speaking; we'll tear the bottom out of our catamaran if we ground on it."

"Go on with your story, laddie, and I'll watch the reef," spoke Mr. Reid. "Tell Brown what you know, and maybe I'll supplement your information." He peered into the darkness as he spoke, and noted the position of the surf-crowned ring of coral, against which the mighty yet scarcely imperceptible swell of the Pacific hurled itself in perpetual warfare.

"Well," began Harry, "Captain Williams is, or rather was, the chief of a gang of adventurers, who, among other things, included the making of counterfeit banknotes as part of their business. He, however, grew tired of them, and engaged you fellows to sail his ship out here so that he might look for some curious remains of an ancient civilisation he knew, or supposed, existed among the Carolines. But Mr. Reid also knew something about these valu-

able relics, it seems, and I wished to get out here because I had a brother who was last heard of among these islands. Well, Mr. Reid and I joined forces, booked all you fellows on behalf of Williams, and signed on ourselves, too. It seems, however, he has discovered our little trick, and, probably knowing that Mr. Willyam Shakespeare would dine on us, sent us on shore here, after giving instructions to the two men who took the launch away. That is all, Brown——"

"Back water!" shouted Mr. Reid. "We're on the reef! Look out for sharks! Jump now, and haul our craft up on the coral!"

He leaped into the warm water as he spoke, and swam to the encircling, jagged coral fringe. Harry and Brown were standing on its spray-drenched surface almost as soon as himself, and then they pulled their long, double-hulled vessel out of the lagoon on to the rough formation beside them. In another minute it was relaunched, through the boiling surf, on the phosphorescent waters of the great Pacific, and a few seconds later the three reef-jumpers were again wielding their paddles as if their lives depended on their energy. And perhaps their lives did, for Willyam Shakespeare was a great

chief in his own estimation, and his indignation, righteous or otherwise, would be unbounded when the catamaran was missed.

The night was warm, and a pleasant breeze, laden with fragrance, blew lightly over the ocean between the many islands. A distant fire-belching peak lit up cloudland straight ahead. It looked like a glowing mass of red-hot embers hung in the sky, for the intense darkness hid the body of the mountain of which it formed the culminating point.

"That beacon is in the heart of the island where Captain Williams' curios are hidden," observed Mr. Reid, as he paused to light a cigar he had found in his pocket. "We'll be at the place nearly as soon as the *Electra*, because it must sail round to the other side, where the only passage through the guarding reef exists. We'll haul our craft over as we did already; and as the village is on this side of the island, Captain Williams can't get back to it much before our arrival."

"He'll get a bit of a surprise when he sees us," laughed Brown. "He'll think we're ghosts."

"But he'll not see us, my man, if we're able to keep out of his sight," Mr. Reid replied.

"He's a vera unscrupulous man, and doubtless has contrived to bring the most of the *Electra's* men round to the belief that we're bad people, and had some scheme against their general welfare. Now, we don't want to be shot, and I happen to know that Williams has a nasty habit of treating people who get in his road to lead medicine."

"Then let us go for him!" cried Brown. "We owe him something for leaving us as dinner for Willyam Shakespeare's people."

"Now you are talking, Brown," the late chief officer answered. "I came here to get these so-called curios that Captain Williams is after. I think I know more about them than he does—in fact, I've seen them, and even touched them, while he can't really be sure that they exist. And this little crowd on this craft, Brown, is going to try to get them—that is, if I have not made any mistake in my estimation of your calibre."

"Well, you haven't, sir; I'm with you to the end of the chapter, and I don't care a flap of a dead dog's steering gear how the affair ends. It will make a good book if it comes out all right, although I can't see where any work for a hero comes in."

"What about Harry?" asked Mr. Reid. "He's got all the attributes, and——"

"What! a second engineer? What can he know of anything except crank-shafts and pistons? and what can he do?"

"He surprised our friend Willyam Shakespeare, at any rate," said Mr. Reid; "and I have little doubt he'll surprise Captain Williams, too, before vera long. The fact is, Brown, Harry here is not exactly what he seems. You have been thrown among us, for good or ill, and if you agree to pull with us—well, you'll get a share of the curios when we stumble across them."

"What do I want with curios?" laughed Brown. "I'm enough of a curiosity myself. I'm with you, as I said, for the sport of the thing; so lead on, Macduff; I don't think I'll be the man who first cries, 'Hold, enough!'"

"The curios Williams is after, and which have already cost the lives of a good many treasure-hunters, are made of gold and osmiridium," put in Mr. Reid. "They are worth several fortunes; and I don't think you would object to having a few thousand sovereigns for your work, Brown. If you did, you could always give them away; I don't

think you would find much trouble in doing that."

"Suffering sinners, sir! Do you mean to say that these curios or relics of an ancient Pacific civilisation are treasures?" Brown was somewhat excited, and he ceased plying his paddle while waiting for confirmation of his wild thought.

"They are, but an awful curse follows the first man who touches them. The spirits of the dead guard their treasure, and I for one would rather have to deal with an army of living men."

"That treasure is ours, then," said Brown. "I don't care a Capetown clinker for dead men, and I feel it in my bones that we'll beat old Williams, too. My fat head! what a book I'll be able to write! Bend the blamed paddles, boys! If we only had a sail!"

But as they had no sail they did their best without its aid, and some time towards morning ran their craft high on the great reef which surrounded the island on which Mr. Reid said the treasure existed. They did not heed the terrific roar of the surf, nor the drenching spray which broke high over the low-lying coral barrier, and very soon hauled the cata-

maran across the strange formation and set it floating on the calm waters of the lagoon. Just as the first streaks of light shot athwart the heavens, heralding the approach of the sun, they reached the shell-inlaid beach, and, without delay, dragged their boat over its surface into the forest which stretched down to within a few feet of the water's edge. Harry thought he could see a masthead light a mile or so down the lagoon, but as the stars of morning were still shining out boldly just there, he did not feel certain that the supposed riding-light was not really a star.

Loading themselves with the provisions Brown had procured in Willyam Shakespeare's village, the three adventurers left their boat hidden as well as possible, and struck inland through the dense vegetation. When the sun was above the great island-studded eastern sea they halted, and breakfasted as well as their commissariat would allow. Then they procured some gigantic palm-leaves, and, stretching them out so as to cover the unequal parts of the undergrowth, lay down upon them and soon were fast asleep. Near them was a large native village, and higher up the foliage-clad mountainside were the remains of some ancient

shrines; but the adventurers apparently gave little thought to their environment. They knew they were on the chief island of the Okapites, and that fierce, unreasoning natives were around them. But they had intended to come there in any case, and the fact that they had been cast away, and had unscrupulous white men for enemies as well as the natives, meant only that they would require to exercise more caution.

Harry had never been out of Britain before, and all things were strange to him; but he had quickly copied Mr. Reid's air of coolness, and showed no surprise in his new surroundings. As for Brown, he was a true philosopher. Nothing mattered to him, although he *did* miss his tobacco. Mr. Reid was a born leader of men. He was calm, thoughtful, keenly alive to all possible dangers, yet fully determined to carry through the mission upon which Harry and he had embarked.

They slept peacefully on the great leaves while the sun climbed through the heavens. Beneath them, but hidden from view by the dense forest growths, the sparkling blue lagoon stretched out unbroken to the reef; and beyond that ring of boiling foam the Pacific

extended in long, almost imperceptible undulations, until its deeper shaded waters blended with the hazy blue of the horizon. Harry dreamed of his long-lost brother whom he had come to find, and many and strange were the positions in which his dream-mind saw him. Brown doubtless dreamed of the book he would write, if he dreamed at all, but Mr. Reid's slumber was not of the kind to favour dream visions. Every few minutes he sat up and listened intently, and apparently was satisfied when the noisy chatterings of the parrots and other birds overhead drowned out all other sounds. Once, however, while the forest-life was hushed in afternoon drowsiness, he thought he could distinguish the beating of a war-drum, and he smiled to himself.

"Williams won't get it all his own way," he muttered. "The natives must know of his arrival now. Our plan should be to keep in the background as much as possible and let them fight each other. While they are doing that, we may get a chance to force the subterranean passage that leads from the temple ruins. I wonder who is chief among the natives now? I remember he who was chief when I left here was no friend o' mine. Ah,

well! I'll feel a bit better when I can put those idols into Harry's hand. Surely the curse is off them now? He must never know the story of his brother."

He lay down and snatched another few minutes' sleep, and in time his companions awoke, too, refreshed and ready for whatever adventures were in store for them. While Brown boiled water for tea in the empty marmalade tin he had taken from Willyam Shakespeare's house, Mr. Reid climbed a tall tree, from the top branches of which he could look down over the lower vegetation upon the lagoon. When he descended, tea was ready; and, taking mouthfuls in turn along with slices of cold wild pig and other supplies which the cannibal chief had unconsciously provided, the three castaways dined wonderfully well.

"If you could give me the lay of the nearest village, sir," Brown said as they finished, "I would pay it a visit during the night and take more stores on board."

"We'll see about that later," Mr. Reid answered. "We've enough food yet to see us through another day, and maybe we'll make a try to get more from the *Electra*. I see it is anchored behind a bluff down in the lagoon."

"Couldn't we swim out during the night and take possession, sir?" asked Harry. "We could deal with Captain Williams in a way not pleasant for him——"

"No, Harry; the risks are too great for that game. We'll maybe do something in the line o' ship-stealing before long, but we're no' just ready to do that now. Strategy is our game; when we have the golden and other precious idols in our hands we'll act boldly, but not now. But we'll see some fun to-night, or I'm vera much mistaken. The natives hold their new-moon feast to-night among the old temple ruins, and we'll be there. I wouldna' wonder but Williams will be there, too. When we're ready we'll start, so as to be there in time to get front seats."

Mr. Reid spoke as calmly as though he were talking of going to the theatre in some civilised country, but Harry knew that underneath his unemotional manner lay a strength of purpose and unflinching courage that would make short work of Captain Williams' scheme when the proper time came.

As darkness enveloped the forest world they tied their stores in three bundles and set out. They had to cut their way through the creeping

entanglements at first, and in the intense blackness of tropical night this was no easy task. Soon, however, they burst out on a bush-track, and, after examining it carefully in the light of a few precious matches Brown had in his possession, Mr. Reid said that it would lead them in the direction in which the temple lay. He also told them that the reason they were going there was because hidden somewhere among the old pillars was the entrance to a secret passage, which would take them to the great Moon God's home, where the treasure lay.

Upwards and onwards they stumbled over the winding path, each sense alert, for instinctively they knew danger was threatening them at every turn. Mr. Reid knew what he was doing and Harry blindly followed him. His not to reason why. Brown, however, although for a time apparently satisfied with things as they were, suddenly broke out:

"I say, skipper, isn't this a bit of a fool's game we're playing? We'll never be able to find any secret passage in this darkness, and we'll likely as not bump up against some snags. I think we should use the night for dropping cards on the people of the village and seeing

what sort of larders they keep. We could admire the old temple ruins just as well by daylight, and——"

"Shut up, Brown!" interrupted Mr. Reid. "We've got more to think of than feeding arrangements. We're not visiting their temple from sentimental reasons, nor do we mean to photograph it for any of the home illustrated magazines."

"I beg pardon, sir. I had forgotten what you told us, and that we're not here for fun. I would like to ask one question though, and shall make careful note of the answer."

"Out with it then," said the leader. "What do you wish to know?"

"I am a bit curious to know what kind of feet the natives of this island wear; I've been squelching snakes and other wriggling creatures by the dozen, and I know our prospective hero is doing the same; now, we've tough boots on our feet, and I understand such things are unknown in the Pacific."

"Oh, most of the reptiles in these islands are non-poisonous," Mr. Reid answered half amusedly, "and the native skin is as tough as leather anyway——"

"I fancied I heard voices, sir," spoke Harry,

interrupting. "Hadn't we better be more careful now?"

The stars of tropical night shone out overhead as he spoke, and the scrub suddenly ceased to envelop them. They had reached a level plateau upon which only undergrowths and luxuriant creepers flourished.

"We have arrived," Mr. Reid whispered. "The ruins are in this clearing; we'll see them when our eyes get better used to starlight. If any people are here, they can't be friends, so lie flat and wriggle forward after me. Don't utter a word."

Some broken pillars loomed through the darkness just then, and Harry could distinguish that arches, pyramids, and many other shapes in solid masonry were profusely littered over the otherwise cleared space in front.

"My false teeth! we've struck a graveyard," Brown muttered. "What a lot of funny tombstones——"

Harry administered a kick and Brown became silent. But he had described the place well. Remnants of great walls, fantastically carved idols or statues, some upright and some lying upon the ground, gave the hillside clear-

ing the aspect of a place of the dead, and the starlight, dim and ghostly, lent colour to that impression.

"The entrance to the passage is somewhere about the middle of these flat stones," Mr. Reid whispered, pausing for a moment. "Watch that you don't grip any snakes with your hands, and keep clear of those long creeping plants, they sting vera severely."

"All right, sir," answered Brown. "Lead on, gallant heart, as thou wert wont, Brown will follow thee or—oh! something has bitten me!"

"Well, you needn't shout so much about it," said Harry; "something bit me too. You haven't got a patent for bites. Hullo! what's that? Listen!"

The three men lay flat and held their breaths. A man was speaking, and in English.

"This is the place," he was saying; "there is some passage entrance about here and our duty is to find it. Light your lamp, Gilson —I mean Woods—and we'll hunt for it."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" muttered Brown; "they're coming here. That's Captain Williams and the third officer of the *Electra*.

"He'll end his life sooner than he needs

"THE TWO LEADERS APPROACHED THE PROSTRATE MEN."

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then," Mr. Reid replied under his breath. "Lie still, lads."

"Blow the lamp!" grumbled the second man; "it won't light. Come here, Clancy! Where in thunder are you? Come here and give us your lamp."

An answer came from the darkness, and a man stumbled heavily over the fallen pillars. Meanwhile the two leaders approached the three prostrate men. Mr. Reid was breathing heavily.

CHAPTER V

THE MOON GOD DANCE

NEARER came the men, and in the eerie starlight their figures were now plainly discernible. Harry was ready, he knew his part, he would make sure of Williams; he felt the foil-linings on his sleeves and smiled, the current was there all right. Even without the aid of his invention, however, he thought he was a match for any man in physical strength, and he was burning to put the matter to a test. He did not know that Mr. Reid had already marked Williams as his special prey, although he guessed that things would go hard with Clancy if Brown got his hands on him. The two leaders were now but a few steps from them, and Clancy was approaching in a direction that would lead him straight over the recumbent men.

"Hurry up, Clancy!" growled Woods. "You're not going to a funeral, you know."

"I don't know about that," Brown muttered grimly.

"I'm not used to graveyard work at night," Clancy responded sullenly. "What's the matter with your lamp anyway?"

"This isn't a graveyard, my man," spoke Williams. "This is the ruins of a temple which perhaps was equal to the most precious in ancient Greece or Egypt. Light your lamp, and we'll investigate more closely the secrets that its massive stones hide."

"Oh, all right, sir," answered the man, pausing to strike a match; "but we've come a mighty long way to explore some ruins. Still, it ain't any business of mine—Oh!——"

"What's the matter with the man?" inquired Williams with an oath. "Look alive, Clancy! We don't want to be here all night."

"Where in blazes have you got to?" cried Woods angrily. "You must be drunk, Clancy."

But Clancy answered not. He couldn't. His throat was compressed in Harry's hands in a manner which effectually prevented him from uttering any sound. He lay in a heap at Harry's side, and Brown and Mr. Reid, guessing what had happened, waited to perform a similar trick with Williams and Woods.

They were not under discipline now, and Brown was as ready to tackle the second officer as Mr. Reid was for the Captain.

But the opportunity didn't come just then. A cry of alarm came from the forest fringe and the two advancing men halted. "What's the matter?" demanded Williams petulantly. "You fellows seem to have lost your nerve. There is no danger, I assure you. The natives here are harmless and we can shoot them down as easily as we could rabbits if they cause trouble. Where in creation are you, Clancy?"

"Clear out!" came a voice from the timber. "There's half a thousand niggers coming up the track and some have got rifles. There's a corroborree on——"

"I'm off!" exclaimed Woods. "Fight them yourself, Captain, if you like!"

He turned and ran back to the shelter of the scrub as he spoke without waiting for any reply. Williams swore horribly.

"Don't run away, you craven-hearted idiots," he cried. "The natives can't know we're here. Lie down and watch; this must be some ceremony night."

He retraced his own steps, nevertheless, and

the three listeners and the prisoner were alone. The last individual, however, was unconscious, for Harry, although only a boy in years, had a grip like the jaws of a vice.

"Come," said Mr. Reid then, "the fun is beginning. Crawl after me into this archway here. We'll be protected on every side but one by its walls, and our revolvers should be enough to hold the open part."

"But what about Clancy?" inquired Harry; "I've choked him, I think."

"No fear," laughed Mr. Reid; "his kind are not disposed o' so easily. Let him lie where he is until he comes to himself. He'll think it was the natives who handled him so roughly when he comes round."

"And if I'm any judge of niggers they'll handle us in no gentle way if they catch us here," said Brown, looking round at the mob of torch-bearing, brown-skinned humanity now bursting through the forest entanglements. "Hurry up with your orders, skipper, or you won't have any one left to carry them out."

"Follow me," was the only answer, and it was obeyed at once, and in less than a minute the three daring ones were inside an artificial erection composed entirely of gigantic single

slabs of stone, in the sides, ends, and roof. It was half sunk in the ground and only the entrance was a weak point, although chinks where the roof fitted on the walls afforded means of keeping a look-out on proceedings around.

Not a moment too soon were they in their strange shelter, and even as Brown and Harry partly closed the entrance with several large blocks of dressed marble-like material the shouting natives closed around them, but ignorant of their presence.

"This is the night of the New Moon Feast," said Mr. Reid; "if we don't interfere we're safe, for after a bit they'll be helplessly drunk with kava and not able even to see straight."

"But Williams and a gang of the *Electra's* men are watching too," said Brown. "That fellow who raised the alarm was Long Tom, of Melbourne, and you can bet he wasn't there alone, although I found him a decent mate in every way——"

"Shut off steam, Brown," said Harry. "We've got every chance of being chief items on a menu-card before morning, and it seems to me that it matters little how many of the *Electra's* men are near; they are not our

friends, or you may be sure Williams wouldn't have them here."

At that moment there marched into the temple ruins a large number of curiously-garbed natives, led by a band and a party of torch-bearers. The band consisted of some bamboo instrument-players of undoubted lung power, and several drummers. The flute-like contrivances emitted, when blown into, strange, unearthly sounds, none of which were in harmony, and the drums—long tabular wooden cylinders covered at both ends with snake skin—added to the din, doubtless in a manner fully in accordance with the musical tastes of the people. The torch-bearers seemed to Harry to be priests of some kind or other, for they quickly assumed the directorship of ceremonies, which at first consisted of kindling a fire on a large stone altar.

The flickering torches lit up the ruins very effectively if weirdness was the object desired, and the spasmodic flashes of light which fell on white pillars, horizontal slabs, and wall-remnants were strongly suggestive of the light of an under world.

Excepting the torch-bearers, who were dressed partially in huge masks and gigantic

feathers, the men were simply arrayed, their complete wardrobe consisting only of a cocoa-nut fibre kilt and a string of beads round the neck. One or two sported bone rings or small pegs through their noses, and on some, strings of shark's teeth and boar's tusks were worn instead of the commoner beads, which probably came originally from Manchester or Birmingham. All were splendid specimens of manhood and greatly superior to the people of Shakespeare's village.

The native who seemed to be the chief climbed up on a broken pillar and sat on the top, a torch-bearer on either side beneath to light up his not unhandsome face, which, strangely enough, was not nearly so dark in shade as those of his warriors. All apparently knew what part they had to play. Evidently they were not amateurs at performing the New Moon feast or dance.

And it was now about to begin. At a sign from the chief the band redoubled the noise it had been producing, and the men at the altar caused great flames to spring up from the huge fire they were tending. The warriors, or chief performers, took up positions expectantly all over the ruins.

"My whiskers!" Brown ejaculated, as with his companions he watched the proceedings through holes in the walls of their hiding-place. "We're in for it now and no mistake. I wanted a front seat, but I didn't bargain to be on the very middle of the stage. I would give a lot to have a shot at that funny old chief sitting up on that broken pillar."

"You'd better give me your revolver, Brown," spoke Mr. Reid. "I am afraid you'll be the means o' giving us away if you canna restrain yourself."

"Don't be alarmed, skipper. I'm not such a fool as my talk may sometimes make me appear to be. I'll do nothing without orders, but I am mighty curious to know what all that means?"

"You'll see in good time, Brown," Mr. Reid replied; "and you may see something that is not on the programme too, for when the chief sits up there during this game, it means that he expects some warrior to challenge him for his leadership. But watch and wait, and if you can, pray; I've seen this thing before."

"Do you know the chief, sir," Harry asked in a whisper.

"There's something familiar about his face,

but I cannot exactly place him," returned the Scot. "He's not the fellow who was chief when I was here before though; he was an ugly old cannibal o' the vera worst kind, and, like Willyam Shakespeare, called himself a Christian. Maybe he was, for he ate the two German missionaries who were here. This present chief looks like a decent fellow though, and maybe he'll see the error of his ways."

"But we have seen no evil as yet, sir," continued Harry; "these natives are merely carrying out some ceremony which may not necessarily mean anything wrong. We have Freemasons at home—my brother was one—and I am sure they are strictly honourable and good-living men?"

"Ay," said Mr. Reid dryly, "they're no' bad fellows—I'm one myself; but they don't walk on red-hot stones, nor is the man mutilated who doesn't see eye to eye with the fellows who control the business. But this game has started. Keep your eyes open and you'll gain much enlightenment as to the ways o' our fellow-men in the Pacific."

The torches had now been fixed in position on pillars and walls so that their bearers were free to use their hands, and they were now

doing so. From the altar fire dozens of round stones were taken, and quickly placed in position in a sort of geometrical design, of which the mound wherein the watchers were hidden formed the centre. These stones were as hot as the fire could make them, and were carried in half-dozen lots by means of long metallic rods inserted through the hole which each bore in its centre. In a remarkably short space of time the design was fully mapped out on the ground with the gleaming stones, and again the band burst out into its best efforts. Simultaneously the warriors, or rank and file, who had been standing by while the preparations had been going on, marshalled themselves into line, and at a signal from the chief stepped on to the hot stones and began to perform the evolutions of a dance surely as strange as ever the mind of man devised.

Fascinated, Harry watched the hot-stone dancers. First they formed a living semicircle, halting when the figure was completed. Then, while fresh men took up their places, the line moved on and bridged the ends of the circling, squirming dancers. Again a halt was signalled by the chief, safe on his exalted seat, and the band made night hideous with sounds wild

and weird. Suddenly, in response to a sign from him, the crescent-shaped design extended, the men always passing on as more came up behind, and Harry saw that the idea was to represent the moon in its various stages. The flutes sounded shrilly, the dull, staccato notes of the drums came faster and more furiously, and the dancers extended the young moon until it had assumed the dimensions of a half-circle. But now they did not stop—probably the hot stones were not comfortable resting-places for bare feet—and as the bandsmen seemed to be approaching their utmost efforts in the way of producing dismal, discordant noises, the half-moon gradually swelled. The smell of burning human flesh hung heavily in the still, close air, and Harry felt slightly sick. Not so Brown.

"I say, skipper," he said, addressing Mr. Reid in what he thought was a whisper, "that smell reminds me I'm a bit hungry. Roast man smells just the same as roast mutton."

"If you say another word on that subject, Brown, I'll fire you out among the dancers," returned the late chief officer of the *Electra;* and Brown, after muttering some words to himself which need not be repeated here, became silent.

Meanwhile the ring had grown steadily, and now it included the arched vault in which the watchers were concealed. The supply of hot stones had been kept up all the time by men apparently trained for the purpose, and as the circle expanded into full moon these people were compelled to run about very energetically to keep in advance of the dancers.

At last, with a crash of music, the moon was full, and the performers came to a rest on the great circle of stones. They did not stand quite still, however, but doubtless the heat of the stones was accountable for the manner in which they hopped without moving from their positions.

The three adventurers were now almost in the middle of the living ring, and the chief sat unconcernedly on his perch only a few feet away. A sort of Runic cross near him seemed to be of some importance in the proceedings, for some warriors not engaged in toasting their feet were fighting each other to determine who should have the privilege of climbing to the top. At length that point seemed to be decided, and a powerfully-built native, naked except for his fibre kilt and a nose-ring, which perhaps was very effective

in warding off chills in the tropical Pacific, scaled the gleaming white monument and sat astride its top ornamentation.

"I know what that means," Mr. Reid muttered. "There's going to be a trial by combat, and that fellow sitting on the cross is the challenger. There are the high priests and judges taking up their positions, too; the men in the circle around us are the jury. Poor old chief!"

"Please explain, sir," said Harry; "tell us what everything means and what is going to happen."

The noise of the band rendered talking a safe matter, and, taking advantage of this, Mr. Reid began:

"Among the people of these islands—I don't refer to the Carolines proper, such as Ponape, Yap, and some of the larger islands now under the German flag, but to those which really belong to an ancient group now submerged—the chief is supreme, and the priests are his parliament and advisers. Like most kings elsewhere, however, the chief has not always a good time. He can't afford to live on the fat of the land, nor do anything which will tend to soften him, for at any moment he is

liable to be challenged to fight for his position. The present chief must have fought the last fellow inside the last six months, for I remember old Tick-tick Tommy, as we called him, because he wore a broken American alarm-clock round his neck, was very much boss here when I left. Usually, however, the assertions or claims of the challenger are heard by the high priests first, and they decide whether or not the fight shall take place."

"Christopher Columbus Cæsar! There are a lot of snakes coming out of the ground and they're biting me!" interrupted Brown. "I'll have to howl out directly."

He struck a match, and by the aid of its light it was seen that the dank, cellar-like apartment was filled with black, slimy, wriggling creatures of all sizes. Brown squashed one under his foot angrily, and Harry jumped back from a monster which seemed just preparing to attack him. Mr. Reid grinned.

"These are not snakes," he said; "and you are vera imaginative, Brown. They can't bite through your boots."

"And what in creation are they, then?" demanded Brown, jumping on another. "They

haven't scales, I can see; but they haven't feet either, so they're not lizards."

"They are eels, man—amphibious, fresh-water eels," answered Mr. Reid. "These islands are vera famous for their night-prowling eels, and they'll maybe be the means o' saving us a lot o' trouble, for no native will come near the place where they are, for they think they are devils. Scatter some salt around where you are standing if you have got any among your stores, and the crawling things will keep away."

"Eels!" gasped Harry. "How could eels live up here? We're not near water, and we're high up on the mountainside."

"That fact is causing me some thought, laddie; but we're no' here on a scientific mission. Hullo! Listen!"

The band had stopped, the dancers had become still; probably the stones were now cold; and all the pillars, crosses, and other monuments were graced by the presence of priests on their summits. A deep silence fell over all. The great chief was about to speak, and his words of wisdom were precious beyond price.

"*Chou en mach*," he cried, and at the sound

of his voice Mr. Reid started violently. "*Tupu en luk ngal hogi om.*"

"What is the beggar saying?" asked Brown. "Why doesn't he talk plain English?"

"He wants you to be able to write a dialect story, I expect," chuckled Mr. Reid. "He has just said, 'People of the olden times, the spirit of mischief has got hold of you all.'"

"I believe the old sinner. I should like to get hold of him!"

"Maybe you'd be vera glad to get away again, Brown; but if you exercise patience I'll translate as nearly as I can all that is said. Meanwhile keep your revolvers ready, and don't worry about those eels. I'm chiefly concerned to know where the entrance to the hidden passage is, and I can see it has been hidden since I saw it last. Michty me! that's what he's speaking aboot!"

The chief rattled on, addressing the grotesquely garbed beings perched upon the ruins around him; and Mr. Reid repeated word for word the translation as he went along.

"'People of the olden times, the spirit of mischief has got hold of you all! Why are ye so perverse? What evil influence has cast its spell over you? I have closed the entrance

to great Urar's Pool, but it was right that I should do so. Have I not been a good chief? Have you not all prospered under me? Has not the copra fetched good prices from the Hoch Hoch men [German traders] and the beche-de-mer been plentiful? Has not the dreaded typhoon left our island home alone, even although he has visited all the neighbouring lands and wrecked many houses? Are you not all happy? And have not all the feasts been kept strictly in accordance with your traditions? True, I fought Tick-tick Tommy because he was a traitor to his people and wished to sell their lands to bad white men, who promised him much fire-water, and much turkey red, and beads, and looking-glasses. He is now a warrior in the service of Willyam Shakespeare, on the island which lies towards the rising sun; but before he fell before me did he not kill the good Hoch Hoch missionaries who were our guests, and who gave us many things that the art of the white man had devised, and which were pleasant to us? Whence, therefore, am I challenged to answer for my shortcomings at this the monthly feast of the great god Urar? Answer me, O thou who challenges, and with the help of the great

unknown God who made us all, and who has made us a mighty people, I shall endeavour to justify my actions, my body against yours. I have said."

"And, by Christmas, you have said to the point," muttered Brown. "If I weren't so blamed hungry I shouldn't mind hearing the whole case for defence and prosecution, for it will all come in in my book; but——"

"Give us a rest," broke in Harry; "the challenger is speaking now. What an ugly man he is, too!"

"'Your words are as crooked as the devils of the pools, who leave their water homes to make sad the hearts of men,'" translated Mr. Reid, adding, by way of explanation, that the aforesaid devils meant, in less flowery language, the eels they had seen; "but you cannot cheat the people. True, we have been prosperous, and have grown much taro and bread-fruit, and the kava-root, which makes glad the heart of man, has been plentiful; but thou, great chief, did not cause these things to be. Our priests make the rain, ward off illness and other devils' devices, bring good seasons, and, by their magic arts, make sure of the welfare of the people. You have for-

bidden that we should eat our invaders, and suffered the white "Hoch Hoch talky-talky-muchy-muchy men" to go forth from our island; and, greatest sin of all, you have hidden the secret passage which led to the great Moon God's treasure-chamber. The people are tired of you, and I hereby challenge you to meet me in personal combat, so that I may kill you and give back to the people that which you have denied them for six moons. I, too, have said. Let the great forgotten gods of the Okapites decide between us.'"

"Great sea-snakes!" ejaculated Brown; "I'll never remember all this. I'll back the present chief if there is a fight."

"Well, there is going to be one," said Mr. Reid; "the priests have just decided that the God of Battle must decide between the two men. The challenger is evidently a relation of Tick-tick Tommy, and is spoiling for a fight."

Some more talk took place on both sides, in which several members of the priestcraft joined. The present chief seemed to be very popular with the majority, and most of the dancers, now standing on cold stones, expressed themselves loudly in his favour. But the chal-

lenge had been given and approved of, and the battle must therefore take place.

And, nothing loth, the combatants descended from their quaint perches and prepared for the inevitable. The combat would take place in the middle of the ring hard by the mound which sheltered the three white men, and the full-moon circle of warriors awaited anxiously the result.

The challenger armed himself with a huge spiked club, but the chief disdained the help of any weapon.

"Come then, O crow-hearted warrior," he cried, in perfect Ponapean. "I shall even treat you as I have done all who dared to challenge me. But first, O my councillors, let me tell you why I closed the entrance to the passage. The devils were coming through from Urar's Pool, and they might lead the white god-spoilers back to the treasure-house. Come, now, crowheart, and let the great God decide."

He thus designated by the opprobrious title flourished his club and advanced, an evil smile upon his face.

"We can't allow this," cried Harry. "The chief is helpless."

"Watch and see," said Mr. Reid.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHIEF OF THE OKAPITES

Somehow the sympathies of the watchers were with the calm and dignified chief of the people. Harry could not understand why he should feel such a partisan in an affair which could only mean trouble to his comrades and himself, no matter how it terminated; yet here he and Brown, and even Mr. Reid, were intensely interested, and, forgetting their own precarious position entirely, fervently prayed that the chief might come out the victor. But things looked decidedly against him. He was not armed in any way, and the other man was wielding a spiked club, which probably had seen service before. The people, too, seemed to be in favour of their present chief; but apparently most of the priests were against him, so much so, indeed, that to Harry it was clear that they were the instigators of the challenge,

doubtless in the hope of disposing of a chief who acted too high-handedly and without consulting them.

The chief was the least excited of all present; he smiled at the man advancing upon him, and apparently was waiting to be struck down in philosophical spirit. Silence, deep and pregnant with meaning, fell over all. The challenger, with a bound, threw himself at the chief, and his great club came down with terrible force towards the head of the unarmed man. And the chief went down under the mighty stroke, and Harry cried out in horror and pushed his revolver through an aperture in the walls. He could not see murder done before his eyes without interfering, even if it meant his own life. But the cool, unemotional Scot checked him.

"Ca canny, lad," he said; "this is no' our funeral, and you're no observing things as closely as I thought you would do. Draw in your gun. There! I knew it!"

"Rule, Britannia!" gasped Brown, "but that is as cute a dodge as ever I knew. Come, let's go out and help the chief."

His words were occasioned by the fact that the chief, in falling, had caught the other man

by the feet and thrown him off his balance; but only Mr. Reid knew that he had dropped just before the club had descended, and that the momentum of the impotent blow had in itself rendered the attacker an easy prey to the chief's subtle trick. Harry gasped, Brown said something unprintable, and Mr. Reid chuckled. The chief still held the too impetuous warrior by the feet, and, while his club flew from his hands and rattled against the walls of the vault in which they were hidden, suddenly flung him headlong over his own stooping body. The man struck the ground heavily, and the assembled people set up a cry of joy. After all, their chief was not bent on committing suicide, as had at first seemed apparent, and which was a very common idea in those parts of the Carolines. The challenger arose, and looked about him in a dazed manner. He did not fully understand what had happened, for doubtless some high priest had told him he was invulnerable, otherwise he would not have tackled the duties of a challenger. But he had to fight to a finish, and his Ponapean blood was up. Blindly he rushed at his adversary, now standing erect again. He was the bigger and stronger-looking of the two men,

THE CHIEF CAUGHT THE OTHER MAN BY THE FEET AND THREW HIM OFF HIS BALANCE.

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but he might as well have closed with a steam locomotive, although such an object was unknown to him. The chief caught him round the middle, and, apparently with the greatest of ease, pitched him over his shoulder. His forward motion had never ceased; it looked as if he had simply turned a somersault over the chief. But Harry at least knew differently. He had seen the grip which the chief had fastened on the man, and realised that he was a master of jiu-jitsu. His surprise was great, but Mr. Reid was startled beyond measure, and he gazed through a chink at the combatants with an intense interest which, to Brown, seemed silly.

"Great Mersey!" the last named ejaculated. "One might think you fellows were watching a football match; what in thunder does it matter to us who wins the championship? They're both the same to us. Hullo! here is another round. I'll bet the challenger gets his own back this time."

"And I'll bet he won't," said Mr. Reid; "that chief is no fool and he reminds me greatly of a comrade I once had."

"Half-time!" muttered Brown in great excitement. "Whew! look at that! Here, boys, let us go out and join in."

"Shut up and keep still," Mr. Reid growled. "I told you the chief would win." The man had risen to his feet and even in the strange torchlight the expression on his dusky face was discernible as one of amazement. However, he had leaped at the chief again and, as if by magical influences, had been dropped flat on the ground the moment the fighters had come into contact. This time the man lay still; he had fallen heavily and it looked as if his right arm was broken.

The natives shouted joyfully and, standing in the great stone circle where they had come to rest, sang a song of triumph in honour of their great chief's prowess. The victor appeared to appreciate his people's acclamations, and he addressed them in what doubtless was a well-phrased speech, but Mr. Reid forgot to translate it for the benefit of Brown and Harry, and thus that rhetoric gem must remain unrecorded. The fallen man was picked up by some of the priests and carried away, and, the performance being over, all prepared to become deliriously happy on the kava which some attendants were now bringing forward in great gourds and skins.

But that kava feast didn't come off that

night. Even while the kava-bearers were decanting their intoxicating liquor into smaller vessels so as to allow of a speedier service, a wild commotion arose in the scrub which surrounded the ruins and the late dancers turned to see the reason. Next moment they had broken their circle and rushed to where their spears and clubs had been piled, and then their own shouts and yells were as deafening and meaningless, according to Brown, as those of the spectators at an important football match.

"I was wondering when this would come," Mr. Reid muttered. "Williams has got tired of waiting, and means to rush the poor natives now. Don't make a sound, boys, but keep your eyes open and your guns ready. We've no call to interfere, but our sympathies are with the natives so far, and if we can help them in any way we'll do it."

"But Great John Bull! they are firing on the poor niggers," cried Brown. "I can see Williams and Woods and half a dozen of the *Electra's* men. That's not a white man's game anyway, firing on defenceless niggers——"

Williams and some of his men had suddenly broken from the dense fringe of creeping

vegetation and forest entanglements, and, with yells and curses, were rushing upon the surprised natives, firing haphazardly meanwhile, possibly with the idea of frightening them, for they certainly did not seem to hit any one.

After the first moment of non-comprehending astonishment, however, the warriors rallied round their chief and awaited the onslaught. Their weapons were spears and clubs, but they could hurl a spear as straight as most of their enemies could send a bullet.

Soon the battle was joined, and for some time it was impossible to distinguish the combatants. One thing, however, the watchers saw. The chief had singled out Williams, and the latter gentleman was having his hands pretty full. His revolver was empty; he had discharged its contents as straight as he could into the body of his opponent with as little apparent effect as if he had fired them into the ground, and now he was experiencing that when dependent only on the strength and skill Nature had given him he was sadly inferior to the noble savage whom he had attacked.

Suddenly he was caught up in the chief's arms and hurled through the air as if he had been of no weight. He lay where he fell, and the battle proceeded without him.

"Come on, boys!" yelled Woods. "Where the mischief is Clancy? Pump the lead into them and the beggars must go down. A fiver to the man who drops the chief——"

"I'm on!" cried one of the men. "Get out your fiver." He took careful aim at the chief as he spoke and pulled the trigger. But the shot went into the air, as also did his revolver, greatly to his surprise. Even as his fingers actuated the mechanism which was to have sent a leaden pellet through the chief's heart, Harry, no longer able to remain a mere spectator, had shot him through the arm and thus diverted his aim. With a loud yell the man turned and ran, and Woods looked round in astonishment. He had heard the shot and seen the result, and marvelled greatly, for none of the natives had fire-arms, and it had been a shot which only a first-class and well-trained marksman could have accomplished.

"Who fired that shot?" he roared angrily, turning round upon each of his followers one after the other. "By Christmas! I'll make it warm for the man who tries any monkey games on here."

"I guess you're talking through your hat," answered a man known as Uncle Sam. "None

of us squirted that little pea ; it must have been some of the ghosts that hang about here."

"We've duffered this little affair," cried Long Tom. "I vote we make tracks back to the ship. These fellows are strong enough to eat us."

"Where's the Captain?" asked some one. "What are we standing up to be speared for, without him?"

"Charge, men! empty your guns among the beggars and they must drop," shouted Woods, plucking a spear from his side and sticking a handkerchief in the gory hole left.

"I'd like to know what for?" grumbled Uncle Sam. "We came here to look for some curios, not to kill niggers or to stand up for them to kill us. I move we—— Oh!" He dropped to the ground with a long, barbed spear sticking in his right leg.

"Blow them, they take lead like pills worth a guinea a box!" cried a man. "We can't make them run, and my shooters are empty. Come on! let us charge them like the Celtic going for the Rangers?"

"We had better get back at once then," answered some one. "If the other fellows are the Rangers we've no chance——"

"Hang both Celts and Rangers, I'm a Liverpool man!" shouted one of the *Electra's* firemen. "I'll bet Liverpool could——" He never said what Liverpool could do; a spear struck him in the shoulder just as he was taking aim at the chief, and simultaneously a revolver shot went through his leg. It was Mr. Reid who was responsible for the second occurrence. Mr. Woods dropped behind a pillar, and his men also sought the best shelter they could find. Williams meanwhile had risen and slunk away into the forest, and Harry noticed that Clancy had also made himself scarce. But the great chief of the people was now directing affairs, and it needed not Mr. Reid's translation of his words to make Brown and Harry aware that he was telling his men to charge the invaders and drive them down the hill into the sea. And at once the valiant natives responded. They had not drank as much kava as they had hoped; but a fight was just as pleasing to them and they were not so surprised as the white men thought, for their chief had warned them many days ago that some time soon they would be attacked by men who wished to steal the treasure of the Moon God, Urar.

With a yell that might have roused that

dread god from his slumbers the warriors rushed at the handful of white men. The latter's weapons were now empty and no time had been allowed to reload. Evidently the chief knew all about firearms. In fact, he now flourished a Colt revolver in his hand himself, and it seemed to Harry that he would not miss the man at whom he fired.

"They're hesitating now, boys," said Mr. Reid. "Now is our chance. If we can get the *Electra's* men started on the back track the natives will assuredly follow them and then we will be free to look for the passage which the chief says he has blocked. Fire into the air as quickly as you can pull triggers and the noise will likely do the trick. Watch you don't hit any man; we're not public executioners, and I believe most o' them are half decent fellows. If you get your eyes on Woods though, drop him."

"You bet," growled Brown. "I owe him something for the way he bossed me on board. Look here, skipper, it couldn't be called by any ugly name if we collared the old *Electra,* could it?"

"An idea o' that kind has been in my mind," Mr. Reid answered. "But we'll discuss that

later if we're left alive. Blaze away wi' your pea-shooters now."

And the trio blazed away; it was impossible to say whether the natives or the white men were most surprised. But the immediate effect was that Woods called out: "Clear out, men; we're in a hole. Haul the wounded along with you if they're likely to live; if not, leave them here, we'll come back afterwards."

With a series of yells and a clatter of drums the natives rushed upon their opponents, then the musicians dropped their instruments, and seizing clubs or spears from their comrades who had both, joined in the pursuit. The white men stayed not upon their going, but broke all records in a headlong rush down through the dense interlacement of creepers and forest growths towards the lagoon, closely pursued by the yelling horde of late fire-dancers, now justly indignant that they should be robbed of their kava after having danced upon the hot stones specially so that they should deserve it.

"Weel, lads," remarked Mr. Reid, "that's one experience over. Williams has got away wi' his life but not much more, and he'll be vera careful how he attacks these natives again."

"But where do we come in?" asked Brown

as the ruins seemed to be entirely deserted. "We haven't much reason to sing a song of triumph. The natives will make short work of us if they catch us, and although I don't mind being killed in a fair fight where I can have a chance of sending the other fellow to glory too, I don't like the idea of being made a living sacrifice to some Moon God or other. What is our programme now? and tell us quickly so that we can get away from these slimy crawlers that seem to be coming out of that wall in front."

"Man Brown!" exclaimed Mr. Reid. "I believe you've struck it."

"Struck what? I'm not an engineer like your young friend, and it's only them that strike——"

"Maybe; this is no the time for argument, but I think you've struck the secret o' the blocked passage leading to the Moon God's treasure."

"Suffragettes and Prime Ministers! where is it? Let us open it out at once before the niggers come back. Oh! look at that monster eel wriggling through that wall there; it's as long as a man and there's the old gentleman downstairs in its eyes as sure as I am a sinner."

"Don't worry about these creatures," laughed Mr. Reid; "they canna bite vera sairly, and although they can give a fellow a pretty powerful electric shock, that is nothing to marooned men like us. Besides we are indebted to them for showing us the passage. They are the devils the chief talked about coming through from Urar's Pool, and which he hoped to stop by blocking up the end o' the passage. The eels in the Pacific Islands are at home on land or in water, and are generally looked upon as devils by the natives. Come, Brown, we'll follow the natives down the hillside and lend our weight to their side. Afterwards we'll think what is best to be done. Meanwhile, Harry, you might dig out as well as you are able the face of that end wall through which these ungainly monstrosities are coming; we'll only go after the crowd far enough to make sure that they really are away, and then come back to hunt for the passage."

"All right, sir," said Harry. "If it is the blocked end of the tunnel leading to the Moon God's pool I'll very soon find it; I don't think these eels will trouble me much now; I gave one a surprise a moment ago, and perhaps it will convey the information it received to the others."

"What did you do?" asked Brown as Mr. Reid and he crawled out through the opening.

"I allowed it to give me the strongest shock it could work up," laughed Harry, "and then I sent a current through it which tied it into knots. Eels haven't the patent of electrical-shocking apparatus."

"Come with us if you are afraid to work here alone, kid," said Brown from the outside. "Maybe you're a bit afraid of ghosts. All the same, some one should stay by our stores. Are you afraid?"

"Not a bit," returned Harry. "Chase your men into the water and you'll find me investigating the place where these eels come from when you return. I am not afraid of anything——"

Next moment his comrades had rushed over the cleared space in which the ruins were situated, and had disappeared in the forest. Brown was intent on procuring more stores, Harry knew, but how he could manage to do so now was more than he could see, for certainly angry natives would not stand upon much ceremony with any one found in their village who had no right there.

Without seeing what he was doing he began

digging at the soft end of the cellar-like vault with a piece of wood which Mr. Reid threw in to him. He didn't worry over being left alone. He knew Mr. Reid thought it was best that Brown and he only should pursue the mob, and he half fancied that the late chief officer desired him to be the finder of the secret passage entrance.

He dug away at the eastern wall, somewhat surprised that it was earth instead of stone as was the material of the other walls. Huge eels seemed to be boring their way through the soft soil like worms everywhere, and it was some time before Harry could master his feeling of repugnance at coming into close contact with the strange, amphibious creatures.

A more travelled man might have been surprised, but Harry took everything as a matter of course. He had expected that most things in the Pacific would be different from what he had experienced at home, and although he wondered a lot he was careful not to express his feelings. He dug into the soft earth unseeing, and when he touched one of the slimy creatures he brushed it aside quickly, or scooped it out of the hole he was making, despite the sharp tingle it sent through his

body, with the end of the piece of wood with which he was working. Sometimes the creatures drew back out of his reach just like huge worms, and he felt as if he were merely digging them out of their holes.

The atmosphere of the little chamber had been hot and stifling, but suddenly a draught of delightfully cool air blew upon his face. He whisked a wriggling monster from the hole he had made and turned to light a match. "I believe Mr. Reid was right after all," he spoke to himself. "There is a passage beyond this and I must have broken through. These eels must be following each other through a hole the first one has made in the soft barricade. By Jupiter! I never dreamt that eels could go exploring like that. I don't wonder at the natives calling them devils, for they are charged full with electricity——"

"Good evening!"

Harry jumped as he heard the salutation and struck his head against the roof. "Good evening!" he stammered. "Who are you?"

"Oh, I am the chief of the Okapites. Who are you?"

"Harry Wilmot, an engineer, but not one of those people who attacked you to-night,"

Harry articulated, vastly alarmed. "I—I—didn't know the Okapites could talk English?"

"Neither they can, but their chief can talk most languages. You see, the Okapites are all dead now and the people who dwell here are not really their descendants, although they think they are. No, don't strike a light or I'll have to kill you; I came here to see what you wanted. I saw that this place was inhabited at the beginning of the Moon Feast and I also noticed that a friendly shot from here did me a good turn."

"Yes, I fired that shot. You are not Tick-tick Tommy?"

"No; I fought him; but where are your comrades? You are not here alone, I know?"

"Believe me, my comrades are not those who interfered with your—your performance to-night."

"Oh, yes; I know all about that—where are they?"

"You don't mean them any harm?"

"Well, I don't know. My warriors deserve a feast now, and you are too small to serve for all; a man shrinks a lot when he is roasted, you know——"

"But you surely don't mean to roast me?"

Harry's tones were certainly indicative of alarm despite his efforts to keep cool.

"Oh well, *I* don't, but some of the warriors might want to sample you. You see, my people were Christianised, but the fellow who was chief before me killed and ate the German missionaries who lived here, and since then the warriors can't get enough to eat. They are tired of bread-fruit, and taro, and yams, and the fish caught in the lagoon are so soft. They want stronger food; still, the flesh of the white man is too salt for them, and I really think we'll have to sail over and capture some of Willyam Shakespeare's young men and women. I don't eat flesh myself because it makes me sleepy and fat, and if I didn't keep in good form some big warrior would challenge me for my position and perhaps kill me."

"Yes," said Harry, "we saw the fight tonight. I don't think there is much danger of you losing your command here. But departing for the moment from the question of your warriors dining on me, how did you acquire your English, especially as the Carolines were Spanish property until the Germans bought them?"

"Oh, I can speak Spanish fairly well too, and I can rub along in German; I like the English best, but I don't know why. Anyhow I know by the current of air blowing through that you have broken into Urar's passage, so you must come away with me at once unless you would prefer to be killed here."

"But I don't want to be killed anywhere," said Harry. "I'll fight you for your chieftainship."

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE FRIEND

THE Chief laughed. "I really don't care," he said, "but I am a bit tired of killing people, and you surely don't think you could stand up against me, the dreaded chief of the Okapites, who brought Tick-tick Tommy to his knees, and many others?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid of you, Mr. Chief," said Harry; "you see, I am neither a German nor a Spaniard, which peoples, I suppose, are all you have dealings with on your islands. I am a Briton, and my people are quite well accustomed to facing odds. You may be bigger, stronger, and uglier than I am—I don't know for I cannot see you properly—but I certainly should prefer to fight you than to go calmly with you to be handed over to your cooks."

"Yes, I suppose some of your people value life. I should have thought you would have been pleased to give yourself to the warriors

I command, on the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number. I had the impression that you white people had outlived the idea of doing good only to one's self?"

"If Mr. Reid were here, he could argue with you on that point, but I am no good at argument. I am very ignorant of most things, and this is the first time I have been away from my own country. I had thought that all South Sea Islanders—you are one, you know—were fierce, unreasoning, unintellectual beings, and now that I have met your Majesty my surprise is a little bit more than I can master. I feel I don't want to fight you, but I certainly don't want to be stuffed with yams and roasted for your warriors. I don't desire your Moon God's treasure. He can keep it. I came here to look for my brother; Mr. Reid and I joined forces, but were cast away on the next island to yours by the people you fought to-night."

"Who is your brother, and who is Mr. Reid? I hope none of them are missionaries——"

"My brother was an adventurous wanderer, and I think Mr. Reid has been the same, although, so far as I know, they never met. Mr. Reid knows of the treasure hidden here

somewhere, but I am sure he doesn't really wish to steal it from your people. He and Brown are helping your warriors to chase the bad white men back to their ship. Brown is one of the men who were marooned with us——"

"I understand; you were a party of treasure-hunters who sought to rob Urar of the rich relics of the Okapites left in his charge, but you quarrelled among yourselves, and thus made my work easy. I expected you; I have watched daily for the appearance of a ship in our lagoon, and now the fulfilment of my dreams is at hand. My people have suffered much from the white men, but they will suffer no longer. I am their chief now and I know how to protect them. But you are not yet a warrior; I cannot match my strength against yours, for the Okapites are honourable and just in their dealings with all men. Come down with me to my village and some younger warrior will fight you. We are not murderers."

"Can all your people speak the language you talk?" asked Harry irrelevantly. "You might allow me to see your face. I did not know that the people of the Carolines were such linguists."

"Ah, you are becoming afraid now! You are changing the subject. I am sorry."

"Then you needn't be; it is true I am yet young in years, but I'm quite able to fight you. A Briton doesn't heed risks, as I have already said, so say how we shall fight, and we'll set about the business at once."

"Very well. I presume your friends will soon return, so perhaps we had better decide matters before their arrival, as I have no desire to have them killed by my justly indignant warriors. Now in which way would you like to fight? I really don't want to kill you, but there seems to be no way out of the trouble."

"I don't care, I don't want your sympathy. Settle the affair any way you like, and remember I'll fight to the last——"

"Yes, yes, I know that, but don't you see that I'm trying to devise a scheme by which I need not kill you."

"And I don't want to kill you," said Harry; "but as it seems we must fight let us do so; you can do with me as you like, if you are able, but I certainly shall not kill you if it transpires that I am the better man."

"Boy, you amuse me, but I suppose it is the nature of your people to be as you are.

We shall not fight to kill. We are here alone and we trust each other. Now the question between us is the treasure of the great god Urar. You have discovered the entrance to the secret passage to his pool, which I caused to be closed, and you mean to visit him and steal that which he has in charge, and which—I tell you as a friend—you cannot recover no matter what arts you bring to your aid. Let us therefore agree upon a means of settling our differences, for of course I cannot allow you to profane the pool in which he lives, yet I don't wish to kill you."

"But how can things be altered," cried Harry, "unless your people will be friendly with us? My comrades are even now helping your people, and although I must be true to my friends, I, for myself, do not desire your mysterious treasure. I should much rather count you among the few decent people I have met in this world, and although your face is black I like you——"

"Enough. The stars of morning are appearing, and my warriors will be returning to look for me presently, for we have much to do to-day. We'll settle our little dispute as true sportsmen as I know your people are. Give

me your hand and he who is first brought to his knees by the strength of the other's grip will acknowledge himself beaten and obey the victor's pleasure. Is that fair?"

"Yes," agreed Harry, "in a kind of way your proposal is fair, but as they do in Parliament in my country, I believe, I move an amendment. You are bigger than I am and it is a foregone conclusion that you'll squash my hand to pulp unless I go down under your grip. Now I hate to take advantage of you, but in civilised countries strength is not reckoned to denote superiority altogether. Science, skill, and other things come into play, and it is the man who can accomplish a certain end by the use of his knowledge and preparation as well as his strength who is deemed the best man."

"Well, use any witchcraft you like. My gods can help me, too, and I am willing to test their skill against all that you can bring forward. What do you suggest. We don't wish to kill each other, but you cannot remain here, and it is time I was back with my people."

"I propose that the trial of strength be not final. Let us see who has the stronger grip—I know it is you—but then let us try both hands and if you can throw me to the ground with the

double grip I'll admit I'm beaten fairly and squarely, and submit to be cooked in the most approved style. On the other hand, if I throw you we'll call matters square and remain friends. I like you, and do not wish to rob you or your gods, but I must find my brother, and I feel sure Mr. Reid will waive all claim to the treasure too——"

"Enough. I know nothing about Mr. Reid nor any one else, but I like you, and shall not see you killed even to feed my warriors. Stretch out your strongest hand and try to twist mine so that I will drop. Ah! your hand is as soft as the youngest of my warriors; you are only a woman. See, you have no chance with me. Rise and we'll try some other plan." The chief had thrown Harry to the ground while he was speaking, apparently without any effort; but Harry's grip was as strong as most men's and the lad knew that he was trying conclusions with the strongest man he had ever met in his life.

"That is the first round to you," he smiled, as the chief raised him to his feet again. "Let us try the double grip now. Here are my two hands. Throw me to the ground now if you can."

"Poor boy! I could throw you down were you three times as strong," said the chief. "I am the strongest man among my people, and all of them are gifted with more strength than the white men who come here to trade or to steal our treasures. See, you have no chance—— Oh!"

"Our battle is drawn now, Chief," said Harry, raising the prostrate man. "I dropped you with the aid of science and not by my strength, but you gave your word that we would abide by the result."

"But that was not your magic which made me fall," said the chief rising with Harry's aid; "it was the work of some big devil from Urar's Pool which paralysed my body. Let us try again; you cannot possibly throw me."

"All right," said Harry; "but remember, Chief, I am not pretending it was by strength I made you fall. What your devils possess I too have and—there, I told you so—rise now and let us be friends. I have your devils' secret."

"You have, and much stronger than they have themselves. Great Urar! I am all tingling yet." The chief rose to his feet and shook himself. "I thought I knew all the white man's

magic," he said, "but you have shown me that I do not. Well, we have fought fairly and squarely and our battle is drawn. Now I invite you down to my house to be my guest until such times as you may wish to leave the island. Come, my young friend, fear nothing; I will help you henceforth in all your undertakings——"

"But my comrades will be back here soon. I cannot go away without them."

"Why, have not you also the white man's talking without speaking magic? Can you not leave a message for them? I believe I could do that myself, although I may only be dreaming when I think so——"

"Oh, yes! I can leave a written letter for them," said Harry, rapidly concluding that it would be to the advantage of all concerned if he could put himself upon a friendly footing with the dreaded chief of the Okapites. He disconnected his hidden battery and pulled out his notebook, the chief meanwhile striking a light with an ordinary match which he took from a box bearing a German trade mark.

Harry was surprised to see that the chief was of such handsome appearance. He had already noted that his features were not un-

"HE HASTILY PENCILLED A NOTE."

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pleasant, but now that he was as close to him as he could possibly be he realised that he was indeed remarkably well formed and of most pleasing aspect.

He hastily pencilled a message in the light of the chief's matches, and read aloud when he had finished:

"'Have gone down to dine with the chief; he is a real decent fellow and talks perfect English. You may safely come to the village, for he knows we are not his enemies.—HARRY.'"

"Yes, that should do," said the chief. "I think you said your name was Harry? Mine is Socrates. I gave myself the name because I had heard it somewhere before. But, come along, we are friends now, and your advice may mean much in the council lodge of my people. You haven't a cigar, I suppose?"

"Great Scot!" exclaimed Harry; "you must be an Englishman! Surely Pacific Island natives can't talk as you do?"

"Oh, Pacific Island natives, as you call them, can do many things. We are an older people than you, and we have grown wiser as we have become weaker. Some day, though, we will rise against the white man and show him

that he is not our master, and has no right to expect copra and mats and beche-de-mer from us. Even now my people are building war canoes, with which we will go exploring and conquering. I am a great chief, and if the gods stay with me I will make my people great also, and worthy of their noble ancestors, the Okapites. But come, the stars of night are fading in the heavens, and soon the sun will rise out of the waters again."

Harry placed his note where it would be readily observed, and followed the chief through the narrow doorway. He did not feel sure that he was acting wisely; but he could not help himself, for he knew that the powerful native could kill him easily if he wished, and he had the impression that Socrates was better as a friend than as an enemy. Still, he marvelled at the intelligence of the chief, and mentally went over the rather poor characteristics of the Polynesians, Micronesians, and other Pacific races which he had been taught in school to regard as especially belonging to their kind.

Down through the heavily-scented forest, he followed Socrates along a winding pad, which seemed to miss all natural obstacles in the

shape of gullies and outcropping volcanic blows. Soon the beating of drums and the blowing of flutes and large shell instruments told him he was nearing the village, and shortly after the torchlights of the people, now looking for their chief, broke upon his gaze. Evidently the warriors had chased the *Electra's* men back to their ship, and were awaiting instructions as to following them in their canoes.

"We shall not interfere with their sports in the meantime," said Socrates to Harry. "I shall give the signal that I am present, and then we'll go round to my house and see what we can raise in the way of food; I am sure you must be hungry."

"A little bit. But won't your warriors want to eat me?" Harry did not know the etiquette of Pacific Island breakfast-parties, and he had surreptitiously reloaded his revolver while following the chief along the pad.

"We shan't meet the warriors until daylight," Socrates replied. "I'll take you round to my house by a back track. I hope, however, your friends will bring me some cigars when they come to visit me; I am tired of turkey red cloth and beads and cheap looking-glasses. I got a gramophone last week from a German

trading steamer, and if her people hadn't been too greedy I should have had a dozen ping-pong sets, too. My high priest gave many sacks of copra for a thing you people call a bicycle, but he can't ride it, and it won't stand up by itself."

"Where on earth did you learn your English?" Harry asked again. "You are master of the language."

"All gentlemen are," replied the chief, in dignified tones. "Our people trade with Fiji and New Zealand, and some of our younger men are even now studying the habits and customs of the white man in Australia and other distant lands. The missionaries who have been here were very good men, although I am told they were rather old and very tough. I would like if some more would come to teach my people, but I fear it will be a long time before the people who send them will know that Tick-tick Tommy is not now chief. He was always hungry." Socrates placed his finger in his mouth as he concluded and whistled shrilly. Evidently the whistle was a signal to his warriors.

He led Harry by a back track through cultivated patches of ground, in which were

growing many things that he did not know, although among them he recognised tobacco, pineapple, coffee, sugar-cane, vanilla, and the ubiquitous taro, yam, banana, and the bread-fruit. Soon they reached a long, low, thatched bungalow-like structure, mounted upon short piles a few feet above the ground. The roof sloped at an acute angle, and was surmounted by fantastically carved and burnt-out monstrosities, symbolical of the old tribal gods. Socrates climbed to the veranda which surrounded the house, and Harry leaped up after him. Together they approached a doorway, over which hung a massive mat curtain, skilfully woven, in lieu of a door. With one hand on its fringes, ready to pull it aside, Socrates turned and extended his right hand to Harry.

"The reigning chief of the Okapites, whose history is lost in the mists of forgetfulness, bids you welcome to his ancestral home," he said imperially. "Here, my young friend with the white skin will ever find sanctuary, and it will please the heart of Socrates the more the oftener he visits him."

Harry did not know what to say. He was not accustomed to dealing with royalty of any kind, and the Pacific prince had surprised him

out of his ordinary good sense. He wondered if it were etiquette that he should drop on his knees or turn and walk backwards in the great man's presence. Then a story of Brown's adventures came to his mind, and he thought that he ought to stand on his head to conform with the proper customs. But he did nothing. "Chief," he said, after a brief pause, "I am not of much account in my own country, and I am very ignorant as to what is required of me from you. Believe me, my comrade Mr. Reid would know exactly what to do, but I am very helpless without him. You are most intelligent, however, for a foreigner, and I am sure you will forgive me for not knowing how to conform to your people's customs. I think you are a very decent fellow, and I am proud indeed to know you; and if I or my two comrades can be of any service to you in any way you have only to say so, and I will answer that we'll stand by you as faithfully as your own picked warriors."

He held out his hand as he concluded, instinctively, yet almost drew it back again, for he remembered that his school books had taught him that rubbing noses, or some similar ceremony, was the equivalent in most foreign

parts of the world. Socrates grasped the extended hand, however, and shook it warmly. Evidently he knew all about European habits, and was too much a gentleman to resent Harry's non-conformance with Pacific etiquette.

"Enter," he said; "the stars of morning are paling in the sky. Soon the Lord of the World will burst above the great sea once more and climb through the heavens, wherein abide the gods of our ancestors who have not chosen to dwell among us."

Harry preceded the chief into the house, where already, in answer to the latter's signal, lamps formed of cocoanut shells, filled with fat, and with several wick filaments floating therein, were arranged in profusion. The chief signed to Harry to be seated on a gorgeous mat, and struck a great wooden drum to summon attendants. Harry was not afraid in the slightest. Somehow he felt that the chief was one of the finest gentlemen he had ever met, and he only wished Mr. Reid had been present also to see that he did not offend Socrates by his ignorance.

The attendants, naked, black-skinned, but not unhandsome men, without showing any

surprise or receiving any verbal orders, at once placed cocoanut bowls of kava before the chief and Harry and retired.

"Drink," said Socrates; "henceforth we are brothers. Our skins are darker in shade, but our hearts are the same. I drink to our lasting brotherhood."

He quaffed his goblet and looked at his youthful companion; he had not yet touched his drink.

"I am not used to intoxicating drinks," said Harry apologetically. "I have never tasted them before, but I shall drink this in your honour though it kills me."

And it nearly did; it tasted like soapy water, and made him feel violently sick for a few minutes. He strove hard to master the nauseousness, and suddenly felt all right, and even exhilarated. He smiled at Socrates, who apparently had not noticed his illness, and said:

"That is surely a strange drink. Does it intoxicate?"

"Oh, yes, but not like the white man's fire-water. Kava goes to the feet and makes one unable to walk steadily, but it leaves the brain or thinking part unharmed. Your people have

a poet who was sorry that the white man 'put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains,' but the kava will not do that; it steals your feet. But never mind, my young brother, breakfast will be brought in presently, and we can pass the time intervening profitably in conversation. Don't worry about the noise outside. Perhaps my warriors have caught one of the bad white men and are eating him. Tell me truly what brought you here. You are not yet of years enough to be a warrior, and your face is as fresh as a girl's."

"Chief," said Harry, "my story is strange. I really came to look for my brother. I heard by accident that he had been somewhere among your islands, and my friend Mr. Reid, whom I had never seen until the night previous to my departure from a town in the other end of the world, called Glasgow, agreed to accompany me, because he thought he knew of some treasure here. But he is one of the finest fellows who ever existed, and I am sure he doesn't really want the treasure if it is yours. We are not thieves, and if the people we came with are, we will fight for you."

"My young brother," said Socrates, "the treasure of the Okapites is beyond the reach

of mortals. Only the devils of the pool can ever see it, and they can't take it away. Great Urar can guard his own. Still, I thought I recognised in the leader of the bad white men an old enemy of mine; and, strange to say, in you I am sure I have found a friend. Can your more acute civilised mind explain those things?"

"I am afraid not, Chief. Perhaps Mr. Reid could; he knows everything, but I am very ignorant of all matters outside the scope of engineering, which is my profession."

"Ah, well! we'll leave the subject alone until we see your friend Mr. Reid. If you see him first, bring him here. But I should advise you, and I know what I am saying, to look for your fortunes in the vast deposits of pearl shell which lie in the lagoon surrounding our island. You white people value the shell and the occasional gem which is found inside, but my people set no special store upon them. Cease troubling about the ancient Okapite treasure, for man cannot obtain that. Many lives have already been lost in the attempt, and I intend to see that some more will yet be offered as sacrifices; but, my dear young brother, don't you make the attempt—— Hullo! what's the matter outside?"

"Where is he, ye deevils? I'll kill every mother's son o' ye if a hair o' his head has been harmed!"

The voice was unmistakably Scotch.

"Dear me!" observed Socrates coolly. "I seem to have heard that voice before. I suppose that is your friend Mr. Reid?"

"It is!" cried that gentleman, bursting through the curtained doorway. "Where is Harry? Ye deevil, I'll hae your black heart's blood if you've—— Man, Harry! Am I dreaming? Is it you I see, alive and weel?"

"It is, Mr. Reid," Harry answered. "This is the chief Socrates, and he's a real good fellow. Where's Brown?"

"Don't worry about me," cried a well-known voice. "I'm looking after the commissariat department."

CHAPTER VIII

THE POOL OF THE MOON GOD

"HARRY, laddie, why did ye gie us such a fricht?" cried Mr. Reid, breaking into the Scotch dialect more than was his wont. "We thought the niggers had eaten ye." He rushed forward to Harry's side.

"Are these people your friends?" Socrates asked coldly as Brown also appeared, laden with spoils from the Chief's domestic apartment. "If so, I really think you should disown them, for they are not fitted to be in civilised society. I think I'll give them over to our cooks——"

"Jumping beans!" exclaimed Brown. "An English-speaking nigger! Where did you pick him up, kid?"

"He picked me up, Brown," Harry answered; "and he's the chief of this island and its people. He is also a gentleman whom

I now number among my dearest friends, and——"

"Well, I'll be beachcombed!" gasped Brown, dropping his load. "You've gone and made friends with the old cannibal chief, and that means we can't steal from him. Why did you do it, kid? Have you no sense? We'll have to starve now——"

"Oh, no," said Socrates; "a starved man is of no use to my warriors. We'll fatten you up a bit with yams and taro. My warriors are very fond of white man; they believe we are all brothers, and he goes well roasted, with vegetables——"

"Another word, ye black deevil, and I'll eat you!" roared Mr. Reid, springing alongside the chief. "We've been fighting for your people all night, and vera little will make us turn and fight you now. We're desperate men——"

"I think I have seen you before," observed Socrates calmly. "If you are my young brother's friend, of course we shall not eat you; but you have come into my house without being asked, and have even attempted to steal——"

"Go slow there, old man!" cried Brown. "I

never knew you and the kid had become pals or I shouldn't have touched your cooking-galley. And, anyhow, if we've had bad manners, we didn't know a nigger chief could tell any difference; and your own hasn't been too good——"

"I apologise for our conduct," interrupted Mr. Reid, gazing at Socrates in a manner which showed he was much puzzled. "We came to rescue our comrade, and didn't know you stood upon ceremony. You see, I happen to have had some experience of your predecessor, Tick-tick Tommy, and, knowing his little playful ways, I thought you were playing the same game. I suppose you ate him?"

Mr. Reid stared at the chief all the time he spoke.

"No," answered Socrates, striking his call-drum. "I fought him, but I do not eat man myself, and he was allowed to escape to another island. But I feel sure I have seen you before."

The chief peered into Mr. Reid's face. For a moment no one spoke, and the two men gazed at each other.

"Ah!" remarked Mr. Reid finally. "I expect we have met before, but under what circum-

stances is more than I can say. Were you always on this island?"

"Oh, no; I have travelled much with the Christian tribes of Yap and Pelew far to the setting sun, and have visited most of the islands which shine in the great sea between these lands and Ponape and Ualan, behind which the sun rises."

"So have I," said the Scot. "I knew old Peppermint of the Pingelap people, and King Paul of Metalanim. I have also fought with Chief Moses Abraham of Aru, and likewise entertained Firewater Peter of Nimiguil."

"You have mentioned names all well known to me," said Socrates. "Were you a missionary?"

"Not exactly. I could never put on enough fat to make a successful missionary, although I had half an idea that I should like to try to show your friends the evil o' their ways. But there have been some fine missionaries among you people, although most o' them were Germans; and I hope some o' them are still uncooked."

"Our people have ceased eating missionaries," Socrates answered, "and the Okapites never did. But the Okapites are extinct, and

only their memory lives; and of that, I, Socrates, am very jealous. The people of the sea of little lands who dwell around us are not such as they were, and though good white men may come among them, bad white men come too, and their fire-water is not good for dwellers in the little lands. My people do not touch your fire-water, and only trade with your people for coloured cloth, glass beads, and musical boxes. Sometimes a man who has much copra to sell also trades for footballs, bagpipes, and cheap looking-glasses; but soon I will have taught my warriors to make all those things for themselves, and then we shall trade our copra and mats for big warships. A son of one of my chief councillors has just come back from New Zealand, and he tells us in our council lodge that great floating fire-spitting things called 'Dreadnoughts' are what you people of the far-away world treasure most now. Can you make me one of them with your magic? I will give many mats, and much copra and vanilla and pearl shells."

The chief paused for an answer.

"Of course we'll build you a Dreadnought, Chief," said Brown; "a dozen of them if you like, and a lot of aeroplanes too. I reckon

you've got to keep up a two-power standard among these islands, and we'll not see you beat."

"Socrates," spoke Mr. Reid, "our friend Brown is only joking. A Dreadnought would take a long time to make, and our visit must be a short one. We'll talk on that subject later though, for I can see you are a vera intelligent man. Again I apologise for forcing our presence upon you, but we couldna help ourselves. Captain Williams, whom you fought last night, left us with your friend Willyam Shakespeare, but we didna like his company vera weel and left his island during the night——"

"Enough, I understand all. I saw everything in my dreams. I know what brings you here, and I tell you it is hopeless; you live here with me and teach my people how to build Dreadnoughts and all the pearl shells in the lagoon will be yours."

"There comes the sun now," broke in Brown. "I usually have breakfast at sunrise, and it upsets my stomach if I am not regular in my habits——"

"And breakfast is ready now," said Socrates. "I am glad we have become friends, for now

I can send my warriors to their homes. See, I gathered them all around by drum-signal while you were here so that you could not escape if you had proved bad men." He pulled the curtain aside and in the first rays of the sun a cordon of fully armed men could be seen standing guard. They were under perfect discipline and seemed only waiting on some signal. And they got it. Socrates stood in the doorway and cried out one word in the native tongue and almost instantly the warriors disappeared.

"You've got them gey well trained, Chief," Mr. Reid observed. "I know some o' them by sight, and it is in my mind that they could give a good account o' themselves in a fight——"

"Come to breakfast," interrupted the chief; "there is fresh fish from the lagoon, wild pig, eggs of many kinds, and much fruits. Coffee, too, is provided, and kava, and some other things which white people like, which I took from a well-filled trading ship which struck on our reef."

"What was the name o' the ship?" inquired Mr. Reid as they passed through heavily curtained passages into a large dining-room open to the fresh air of sea and land on all sides,

although Harry noticed that there were massive curtains rolled up which would effectually close in the room when lowered.

"The ship was named the *Enterprise*," Socrates answered, and Mr. Reid started violently. "Where she came from makes no difference. She was driven up on our protecting reef in a typhoon and all her people drowned. At least, we found no one on board either dead or alive, and no strangers but yourselves are on our island."

"And Willyam Shakespeare got some of the plunder too?" said Mr. Reid. "I suppose he raided you just about that time?"

"You know a lot about these islands and their people!" Socrates returned, greatly surprised. "Who are you?"

"Oh, nobody of any account, but that ship partly belonged to me, and I saw some of its stores in Shakespeare's village."

Again the chief looked long and curiously at Mr. Reid. He appeared to be striving to recall some event to memory.

"Look here, kid!" broke out Brown, "this game of ours is getting deeper. Are you on a private mission? Our skipper seems to know a bit too much of affairs here——"

"Close that shaft of yours, Brown," cried Mr. Reid; "you'll catch cold if your mouth is always open. Don't mind him, Mr. Socrates; he doesn't know much about philosophy and he really is well meaning. He is thinking about writing a book, and——"

"Oh, I have met his type before; don't trouble to apologise for him," laughed the chief. "He says what he thinks and therefore hides nothing. He will never make the wealth that might be his if he kept his own counsel, but he is an honest man."

"I perceive you are well named, Chief," replied the Scot, while Brown turned purple with indignation at the native's words.

"No more talk until after breakfast," said Socrates; "you white fellows should think more and say less. My young brother of the handsome face is the wisest among you. He speaks not, but his thoughts are everywhere."

No more was said just then. Mr. Reid would have liked to carry on the conversation, but he knew that although Socrates talked English so well, he probably didn't understand half of what he said himself, it being considered a great accomplishment among Pacific Islanders to be able to pass as having a knowledge of European languages.

This they are enabled to do to an extent extremely surprising to guide-book travellers and check-suited tourists, because their memories are very retentive and they have the gift of mimicry developed to a high degree. Indeed, some natives who can scarcely master their own dialect can rattle off long speeches in English, French, and German almost perfectly. Of course they do not know what they are saying, but the aforesaid traveller to whom they are airing their linguistic abilities is not aware of that fact, although he frequently has reason to wonder at the abrupt changes they make in the nature of their conversation.

The breakfast was a great success; they sat on the ground and all the viands were handed round by pleasant-faced youths, being trained in the service of their great chief. When it was over Socrates said:

"Now, my friends, this lodge is yours and all that is in it while you remain with me. But I cannot answer for your safety throughout the island until a council is held to discuss the invasion of the white treasure-seekers. I am now going to retire to my private apartment to sleep, for I know that to-night the bad white men will land on our shores again."

"But while we are deeply grateful for your kindness to us," said Harry, "we cannot consent to remain here with you. I came to look for my brother, and I must wander round to see if any of your warriors can give me any information regarding him."

"I'll not lie to you, Chief," said Mr. Reid. "I came here to look for your great ancestors' hidden treasure."

"Which is beyond your reach," answered Socrates; "the gods can guard their own."

"I came here because my health wasn't too good at home," put in Brown. "It was always raining in Glasgow, and when it was proposed to run Sunday steamers on the Clyde I thought it was high time I left such a sinful country as old Britain."

"It doesn't matter," said Socrates. "I am not interested in conditions in foreign lands. You are free to do as you like here while I remain chief of the Okapites. And to prove that I have faith in my ancestors' gods I now give you my full authority to go and find the great Moon God's treasure if you can. Before I go to sleep I will tell my chief adviser to issue a mandate to that effect, but in return I shall expect you to help my people to fight

the bad white men who now rest in their steamship out on our lagoon."

"Agreed, Chief!" cried Mr. Reid. "We are your friends, and, after all, I don't want your ancestors' treasure. Perhaps the pearl shell will be enough for us. The treasure was cursed anyway——"

"But the curse is now removed. He who finds can take it, but both gods and devils guard it and no mortal can set eyes upon it; it is beyond the temptation of men, and even the white man's greed cannot make the sacred images his. But go now and rest. My orders will be all over the island in an hour's time, after which you may go where you will safely as long as you wear the symbol of Urar on your heads, so that my warriors may know you from the white men who are not my friends."

Socrates disappeared through a curtained recess as he concluded, and but for the presence of one intelligent-looking native the three treasure-seekers were alone. Brown at once began making up a load of food. He was a very matter-of-fact man.

"Where can we rest?" Harry asked the attendant in English, more for the sake of saying something than any other reason.

"God save the King, and Scotland for ever!" replied the youth promptly. "I to the hills will lift mine eyes——"

"No, you won't," cried Mr. Reid. "*Yawi ngui napi?*"

"*Ang gui,*" answered the native. "The boy stood on the burning deck, under the spreading chestnut-tree. I will not go without my father's word——"

"Glasgow, Greenock, and Gourock!" gasped Brown. "What's the chunk of chocolate trying to say?"

"He's telling us that we can sleep peacefully over there, but he conveyed that information in two words," said Mr. Reid. "All the rest of his speech is what a lawyer would term irrelevant."

"Goodbye, little girl, goodbye," again began the native, but Mr. Reid spoke to him in his own language, and in answer he spoke volubly a string of words meaningless to all but the Scot. In response evidently to the order he then received, he went away, and Mr. Reid informed his two comrades that they might sleep safely on the shady side of the veranda for a few hours until the chief's orders as to their immunity had gone forth throughout the village. "But we'll not waste our time in

slumber," he concluded; "we'll wait until we think the warriors have gone to their lodges for a little rest themselves, then we'll clear out. Socrates is no doubt a fine fellow, but all Caroline Islanders have a habit of changing their minds vera abruptly, and maybe we're better camping by ourselves a fair distance away from the village. We can keep in touch with him and prove that we are friends should Williams land a big shore party."

And thus it was that while the sun was still low in the eastern skies the three adventurers dropped down from the veranda of Socrates' house and steered up the hill. Brown, needless to say, had a burden of provisions with him which looked large enough to feed a small army. The village was wrapped in slumber, for the warriors well knew that until night they were safe from attack and they desired to be as fresh then as possible.

The houses greatly interested Harry. Some were round and some square in shape, but all were built upon a raised platform of stones, or on piles, and all were crowned with a long tapering roof of cocoanut-fibre thatch. Carved figures supposed to represent gods of special interest to the tenant's family surmounted the

gables, usually standing upright, but occasionally, when typical of lizards, lying flat along the apex of the roof. The houses were all surrounded with gardens in which were cultivated all the necessaries of Pacific Island life; gorgeously-coloured creeping plants grew all over the mud or wooden walls, rendering the whole a vision of loveliness which, to Harry's fancy, suggested paradise. A subtle scent hung in the hot morning air and the birds sang joyously among the luxuriant vegetation which everywhere abounded.

"Here, I'm not a motor-car," wailed Brown, the perspiration streaming down his face. "I think it is only a fair thing that you fellows should help to carry this load I've got; you'll help to eat it."

"You see where you land by attending too much to your stomach," said Mr. Reid; "neither Harry nor I gave a thought to burdening ourselves with eatables."

"Which was where you showed yourselves mighty poor thinkers," Brown answered. "If you had cast your thought-machinery ahead only a few hours, you might have found out that it is a sure thing to gamble on that we'll be hungry. Now, I'd rather be a derelict

wanderer with plenty to eat than one without visible means of support."

"You're as long-winded as a Scotch town councillor, Brown," laughed Harry. "Give me some of your load."

The burden was divided and they pushed onwards and upwards along a winding path. Overhead the foliage shut out the sky, but behind they could still see through the slight clearing the track afforded the sparkling blue waters of the lagoon, and the boom of the dazzling white surf on the reef beyond sounded like a gentle lullaby in their ears.

At length they reached the cleared space in which stood the ruins of the old temple, but how differently everything looked in the brilliant sunlight! Harry could have gazed at the lasting evidences of the Okapites for hours, but his mind was recalled to the present when his eyes fell on the gory signs which remained of the fight which had taken place only a few hours previously. The stones on which the dancers went through their strange evolutions were still warm and the sacred fire in the great altar still smouldered.

Brown thought this latter fact an excellent opportunity of boiling a billy of tea, but Mr.

Reid would not hear of the suggestion. "I'm a vera strict Presbyterian myself," he said, "but I think that to perform such an act as you propose would be vandalism o' the most iniquitous order."

"What is that?" asked Brown. "I want something iniquitous in the book I'm to write to make it sell."

"Put yourself in then, my man," advised Mr. Reid dryly; "there's nothing like cold truth——"

"Let us get out of the sun as soon as possible," interrupted Harry; "here's the vault in which we hid last night, and which I am sure is the end of the secret passage. But where have all the eels gone?"

"They crawl into holes through the day," answered Mr. Reid; "they don't like the intense heat of the sun beating down upon their slimy skins. But you're right, Harry; this is the entrance sure enough. See, you broke through the wall last night, and there's a current of cold air coming through the hole like what might come from a refrigerator. Widen the passage, lads, and crawl through. I'll go out and pick up some of the discarded torches used in last night's ceremony."

"It doesn't need much widening," growled Brown; "it is big enough already to allow a small motor-car to pass. I hope somebody hasn't been before us at this treasure-stealing business."

No reply was made to Brown's remarks, and next minute, armed with torches, they all crawled through the aperture in the end wall and found themselves in a long, draughty tunnel, on the floor of which huge eels still wriggled forward to the daylight. Mr. Reid led the way, for he said there were several dangerous parts which he thought he knew.

The passage was surely a strange one. Sometimes it narrowed down so much that they had to wriggle along among the eels, and then, after a few yards of this style of progress, the roof would suddenly shoot up far above the zone of their flickering torchlights, and they would be standing in a mighty cavern worn out in the heart of the rocks by the ceaseless action of water, which could be heard trickling all around. In such great halls myriads of sightless winged creatures flitted aimlessly, hurling themselves against the daring intruders with all their force and then falling with broken wings to the damp floor among the eels. And what

sounds filled the place! It seemed to Harry that he had entered the region wherein lost souls had their abode, and the wails of departed spirits, the shrieks and groans of fiends in torment, and the utterly indescribable sounds which the bat-like creatures emitted filled him with a horror he could not conceal from his comrades.

Mr. Reid noticed his state and said kindly:

"We'll soon be through, laddie. I had forgotten that your experience o' life had been confined to Britain, and that hollow mountain echoes and blind denizens o' the dank darkness were strange to you. But we are approaching the home of the Moon God, Urar, and all this is the region o' his protecting hordes——"

"I remember reading about the gloomy portals of some place or other underground when I was a good little schoolboy," put in Brown, striking out at a flying creature which persistently attacked him, "and a dog with a lot of heads guarded the entrance."

"Ay, your memory is no' bad," commented Mr. Reid; "and here is the River Styx now and we've got to be Charon ourselves."

A black stream of water stretched in front, and in the weird light of the torches Harry's

"HE PLUNGED INTO THE DARK WATERS."

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excited fancy peopled its depths with nameless horrors.

"When we swim this pool," went on Mr. Reid cheerily, "we'll be past the worst o' the passage, and a short journey downwards will bring us out into daylight by the side of Urar's Pool. Remember, though, the water is as cold as ice, and you mustn't hesitate once you enter it."

"I say, skipper," said Brown, "when you come to cross the real Styx you'll be able to teach the ferryman all about his business. I'm beat if I can imagine how you ever had the nerve to explore this place by yourself."

"I wasn't by myself," answered Mr. Reid. "Stand here until I get across with a light and then throw the stores over."

He plunged into the dark waters, and hearing his torch high in one hand, paddled to the other side. The distance was only about twenty feet and the hearts of the others rose as they beheld the dauntless Scot standing safely on the opposite ledge with torch in hand. Brown adroitly threw their stock of foodstuffs over to him, and although some tins of jam and other commodities were engulfed in the pool in the process, most went across all right.

Then the other two effected the cold passage and picked up their loads again.

"Run now, lads," cried Mr. Reid; "we'll be out in warm sunlight in a couple of minutes."

And they were. Suddenly the walls closed in on them, and when they crushed through a narrow slit in the rocks they stood blinking and steaming in the sun.

They were by the edge of a pool fed from above by a waterfall, and from the pool the water leaped again down into a narrow gorge. They had reached Urar's home.

CHAPTER IX

THE CAPTURE OF THE "ELECTRA"

"SHADE of Shakespeare! Where are we now?" cried Brown in unbounded astonishment. "Is this the South Pole, or a scene in Mars or some other planet? Great Britain and Ireland! What a waste of good, fresh water!"

Mr. Reid made no immediate answer, and Harry said nothing. The lad's nature was one that caused him to repress all emotions when he was startled by anything, and this characteristic, since he had known Mr. Reid, had evolved itself into a coolness under all conditions equal to that of the most hardened world-wanderer. He gazed around and took in all the features of the scene in detail. He knew that it was not for the mere sight of the waterfall, grand and imposing as it was, as it fell over their heads in a graceful curve, that Mr. Reid had led them thither. And as

Mr. Reid also was lost in thought he continued to photograph his surroundings upon his memory.

Behind him rose black fern-clad rocks which stretched upwards from the ledge round the pool until lost in the rainbow-coloured spray of the falls. At a point a hundred feet up or so the waterfall which fed the pool gushed out, and he guessed that it was the outlet of the sullen stream they had crossed in the under-world.

Flanking the pool, above and below, were great vertical walls covered here and there with dwarfed vegetation, and beyond, in the gorge, partly hidden from view by the spray from the waters as they took their second leap, was a narrow defile through which the turbulent torrent forced its way to the sunlit lagoon, just visible at the point where the gorge cut the mountain-side. Some tall trees grew from some soil on a lower level than the pool, and their large, light green leaves dipped in the swirling waters. That was all—no, not quite; through the defile which led down to the lagoon a yacht-like steamer could be seen floating peacefully: it was the *Electra*. Motionless it lay on the shimmering waters, beautiful as

a bird, and the watcher felt sure that with powerful glasses such as it had on board, the waterfall beside them could be distinguished from the surrounding rocks. But no craft could stem the torrent beneath, and any other way to or from the sea, except by the road they had come, must be over gigantic precipices.

"It was just where I am standing now," spoke Mr. Reid musingly, "that I stood when —when—I last looked upon Urar's treasure. A big golden god lay there by that nettle-tree, and a couple o' osmiridium idols rested where you are standing, Harry. More were scattered all around this ledge and—and—— No, lads, I canna think aboot it."

The Scot sat down on the damp rocks—his clothes were already soaking, and dampness made no difference—and covered his face with his hands. Harry was greatly touched by the strong man's grief, but he felt that silence was more truly sympathetic than speech at the moment. He had a brother, wandering somewhere, if not dead, and he felt very much the same as Mr. Reid, who was evidently thinking of some lost one too.

"But where is the blamed treasure, skipper?" asked Brown after some silence.

"We didn't come here to gaze upon Niagaras, I'm sure, and if you'll just whisper where that Moon God's money is, I'll get started to work and leave you fellows dreaming. Failing your answer in accordance with that which I shall put into my story, I shall boil the billy."

"The treasure!" repeated Mr. Reid, rousing himself. "I had forgotten about that. Why, it is not here! It has disappeared! Some one has taken it away!"

"Then here goes for boiling that billy of tea," said Brown unconcernedly; "I'm hungry, and wealth I scorn."

"Harry, laddie, I've led you here for nothing," said Mr. Reid, gazing wildly around. "The treasure has been taken away since I was here. Oh! have I taken you round to the other side o' the world for nothing?"

"Don't worry about that, sir," said Harry; "it was really I who took you. Don't you remember I told you I had a brother out here somewhere, and we agreed to come together. I didn't want any treasure, and it is you who deserve my sympathy."

Mr. Reid groaned. "Laddie, I canna tell you what this means," he said. "Believe me, I saw the golden gods and osmiridium idols

lying around this pool, and I thought that we had nothing to do but to come and take them away. I thought that I did know the secret of the passage we have just negotiated, but—but——"

"You didn't count Captain Williams," said Brown abruptly. "He may not be a straight man, but I'll bet my whiskers he is a smart fellow. He's come here while we've been sleeping down in Socrates' village."

"What do you mean?" cried Mr. Reid. "Explain, quick! What proof have you that he has been here?"

"Well, here is a gold—I mean brass—button with *Electra* marked on it, and I see it isn't yours, and Schnake wasn't on shore, and we saw the third as good as knocked out in the fight last night. It can only be his. The fact is, skipper, you've made the mistake of underrating the people you're fighting against, and old Williams has come here before you somehow and got the treasure. We can't help it, and it's best to be as philosophical as we can about it. Here is a button off his coat, and that tells the story."

"But Williams didn't know of the passage," cried Mr. Reid. "He was second in command

in a party who were looking for the Okapites' treasure, and when Tick-tick Tommy killed the chief he sailed away with his men, and I next saw him in Glasgow on board the *Electra*. He couldn't know of Urar's Pool, and he couldn't remove the treasure even if he did, for none of the idols weighed less than half a hundredweight, and some were over three hundred pounds in weight. Surely the curse o' the gods hasn't fallen on me again——"

A burst of laughter interrupted his words, and a well-known voice called out:

"Suppose you dive into the pool and look for the precious images, Reid. You have done many great things already. Why not rob the pool and kill these slimy devils?"

"Captain Williams!" gasped Mr. Reid. "Catch him, boys; I am not seeing right myself; he has robbed us!"

Brown and Harry sprang to the tunnel entrance, but the echo of laughter which greeted them told that their pursuit was in vain. Up the limestone cave floor they rushed after the fleeing phantoms, but the splashes in the strange stream which flowed through the heart of the mountain before finding egress showed that further chase was useless, and that Captain

Williams and some of his chosen satellites had again scored heavily against the three marooned adventurers.

"Stop, Brown," cried Harry as they reached the bank of the underground river. "We needn't follow them any farther. We are only two against a number we don't know, even if we could overtake them, and if they have really stolen the famous Okapite treasure our only chance of getting square with them lies in adopting still more desperate measures than following them. Let us go back and consult Mr. Reid about capturing the *Electra*."

"Now you are speaking," exclaimed Brown, halting. "Lead on, Macduff, and Brown shall follow thee if he doesn't get his feet wet. Watch these slippery eels, though; I stumbled twice on them running up here."

They retraced their steps through the dismal cavern, and found Mr. Reid muttering some strange formula by the side of the pool. "Capture the *Electra!*" he cried, on Harry mooting his proposal to him. "The vera thing. The Okapite gods have cast a spell over me and only some work such as you suggest can remove it. But it is now late in the afternoon and we are tired men; how can we best do it?"

"Oh, I don't think there is much trouble about it," answered Harry hopefully. "We'll get down to the shore somehow and wait until dark, then either swim out or borrow a canoe and sail out to the ship. All the men will be asleep; at least, those who are Williams' chosen crowd will be, for they have evidently been ashore all day instead of resting in their berths on board as we thought——"

"But Brown and I saw them take to the steam launch," interjected Mr. Reid. "We must have been dreaming; Williams couldn't have been here——"

"I never dream," said Brown, "and I'll go the wages I'll never get now that Williams was here, and that half a dozen of the worst crowd on board were with him. He must have dodged the natives and doubled back, and stolen the golden images while we were idling our time away with Socrates in his village."

"Do you think so, Harry?" Mr. Reid's voice was almost pathetic.

"I do," answered the lad. "We followed the band up through the hollow mountain to the river, and would have continued the pursuit only it struck me that they were far stronger than we were, and that our chance lay in acting desperately in another direction."

"Then, so be it, laddie. We'll even capture the *Electra,* and hang Williams at the yard-arm if need be. But I confess I am a bit unnerved here, Harry; this place has painful memories for me; you take command now, and whatever you think best to do, Brown and I will back you with our lives."

"But why do anything, sir? We are friendly with the chief of the island, and there is pearl shell enough in the lagoon to give you two all the fortunes you require. I came here to look for my brother, I don't want a collection of images. If you desire wealth only, why trouble further about Captain Williams?"

"But I don't want wealth," interposed Mr. Reid. "I have already more than my simple tastes require. It is for you I am working now; the Okapites' treasure is yours by every law of mankind. Besides, I happen to know that Captain Williams stole the *Electra* from your brother."

"What! You knew my brother!" cried Harry, and even Brown gave vent to a remark of surprise.

"I did, laddie. He and I were mates in many adventures in which any of us would give, and, indeed, did offer his life for the

other. Don't ask me more; the treasure which was here is justly yours, barring Socrates' claim, which we can settle with glass beads, or marbles, or coloured cloth; the *Electra* belonged to your brother, under another name, of course, and to recover it I am with you while life lasts——"

"Ditto here," announced Brown, "and hang my book! I'll stand by you, kid—I beg pardon, I mean sir; no, I mean Mr. Harry—until we drop anchor alongside the *Broomielaw,* or take a sail on that river which our skipper cannot pilot us across. Just say the word and Brown, A.B., C.A., and journalist, among other things, will obey."

"Then if the *Electra* belonged to my brother we shall retake it for him," cried Harry. "Mr. Reid and Mr. Brown, I thank you for your words; I am grateful indeed; but I have no hopes of being able to repay you when we find my brother, though he will see that you are not unrewarded, and——"

"Stop, laddie!" cried Mr. Reid; "dinna speak another word for ony sake. In your brother's interests I wad gang through the infernal regions and tear the deevil frae his hole this vera meenit."

Mr. Reid's use of the Scots' dialect to such an extent shows he was deeply moved. But on such occasions his meaning was often dearer.

"Yes, just spit out the orders, Commodore," said Brown, "and if we don't carry them through it will be because the Moon God or some of his family have got hold of us."

"You're speaking sense for the first time, Brown," commented Mr. Reid; "so say what is to be done, laddie."

"Can you lead us down to the beach anywhere near the *Electra,* which we can see away over there?" Harry asked.

"I can," answered Mr. Reid; "but the man who follows me will need a stout heart and a stronger arm, unless we go back through the mountain tunnel."

"Well, Brown has got both," said Harry, "and I'll pull through somehow. Lead on; we'll make the *Electra* ours and then decide upon our next move."

"But we'll have tea first," suggested Brown. "I've got some dry timber——"

"No! we've already lost too much time," Harry responded, feeling wonderfully exultant in now being the leader of the party, yet conscious that Mr. Reid was holding back

purposely. "We'll hide all our stores here except what we need for one meal. When you are ready, sir, we'll follow you." The last sentence was addressed to Mr. Reid.

"Then come!" cried the Scot, springing to his feet. "If Williams has the Okapites' treasure, he shan't have it very long. We're going to climb that rock-face on our right and go down over the hilltop to the lagoon. I did it once before, and with the help of Providence we'll do it again."

He clutched the clinging stem of a rock-rooted tree as he spoke, and with the agility of a cat swung himself aloft into its wall-hugging branches. Brown paused to light his pipe, filled with dried leaves of some kind, and followed, and Harry, after a last look round, pulled himself up the rock-face after him.

For fully a hundred feet the clinging limbs of the tree helped them to ascend the rock-face which formed the right-hand side of the *cul-de-sac;* then, when its more slender-creeping tendrils afforded no more support, Mr. Reid clutched the moss-like vegetation which grew upon the slimy wall, and continued an upward course hand over hand. He paused occasionally to look back at Harry, but the lad was never

far behind Brown. He scorned that gentleman's suggestion that he should take the middle course as they left the tree-branches; he knew he was as strong in the grip as the true-hearted man of many professions, and being much lighter, he held another advantage. And he was in first-class form; he was little and agile, and strong and wiry; what any man could successfully accomplish, he could do. So he kept his place as last in the mountain-scaling procession, but he had good cause to marvel at the tremendous powers of strength and endurance shown by Mr. Reid, who frequently reached down to assist Brown over a difficult piece of almost supportless climbing.

"Can you hold out much longer, Harry?" Mr. Reid called out as he reached a point above the spray of the falling waters, and from which a much clearer and less obstructed view of the lagoon could be obtained.

"Easily," came the answer. "I'll climb after you to the moon if you like; this is only healthy exercise——"

"Has this blamed wall no top," asked Brown, "or has the place where the top should be fallen off?"

"Are you played out, Brown?" Mr. Reid

inquired anxiously; "we haven't far to go now."

"Played out be blowed! I'm only beginning to enjoy myself," replied Brown with pauses for air between each word. "But I know the meaning now of a famous Scottish song."

"Dinna waste your wind," came shortly from above. "Think on your sins, and look upwards."

"I was thinking of 'The bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond," gasped Brown, "and I know that Scotland was a polite name for another place not known geographically——" He paused for want of breath.

"I don't understand your meaning, Brown," Harry sang out close behind him. "Why is Scotland synonymous for another place?"

"'You'll take the high road an' I'll take the low,'" sang the sailor, "'but I'll be in Scotland before you——'" Sheer lack of breath compelled him to desist, but his meaning was perfectly plain.

"You'll take the high road too, ma man," said Mr. Reid; "we're landed now. Give me your hand."

He hauled the exhausted man up beside him, and next moment Harry joined them, appar-

"HE HAULED THE EXHAUSTED MAN UP BESIDE HIM."

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ently the freshest of the three. They were on an outjutting ledge, which continued along the rock-face down the ravine until it ended in the declining summit of the gorge walls.

"I expect this is where the sacrifices took place long ago," said Mr. Reid, glancing down at the pool. "I didna understand the meaning o' the bones round the Moon God's Pool until I reached this place the first time, but this track explained the reason. The Okapites threw their prisoners or victims over into that pool from this ledge, and probably we are the first, second, and third men who have ever travelled in the opposite direction. But come, lads, the time is passing."

"How about a billy of tea now?" suggested Brown. "We deserve something after that climb——"

"Nary tea nor anything else until we get on board the *Electra*," interrupted Mr. Reid. "We can't afford to lose any time; it will be dark in an hour from now, and when the sun dips out of sight we must be on the beach, ready for a big swim if need be."

"All right," said Brown, with a sigh. "I reckon I can starve with any man, and I'm always getting more copy for that blamed book."

After a few minutes' rest Mr. Reid led the way up the ledge, and soon the little party were standing on the open hillside, on a track which led back over the mountain-top to the village on one hand and down to the lagoon on the other. But mountain climbing was not now their object, and without delay they started down the pad leading to the coral strand. The scenery was the same as that which they had encountered while forcing a way up from the beach on the other side when they had first landed, only the pad made their progress easier. Just before sundown the gentle ripple of the lagoon broke upon their ears, and with one accord each undressed and plunged into the cooling waters. Their garments had long since dried in the sun, and they were very hot with their exertions. Now Brown again proposed his billy of tea, and even Mr. Reid admitted that it was just as well that they had some refreshment before tackling the task on hand.

"It's a long swim," he said, "and the sharks are vera hungry about these parts. Nevertheless, we'll do the trick. Captain Williams hasn't got round yet, for I see the gangway is down——"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Harry. "Here is the petrol launch of the *Electra* drawn up among the scrub. He and his men have not yet worked round from Socrates' village. We took Brown's idea, in a way, and while they took one road we took another; and we're—if not in Scotland, at least in possession of the launch before them."

"I always knew I was cut out for a prophet, or a poet, or a story-writer," said Brown. "But sit down on the softest chairs you can find, gentlemen. Tea is ready, and I've carried enough stolen food to serve us all."

When the three men had resumed their clothing, and had partaken of Brown's hastily prepared meal, darkness had completely enveloped the land, and as yet no signs of the approach of Williams and his men were apparent.

Thus the launch which had first landed them on Willyam Shakespeare's island was quickly taken possession of, and, guided only by the lights of the *Electra* lying at anchor two miles out in the lagoon, the castaways sailed out on their desperate mission. Harry sat by the engines and Mr. Reid steered, while Brown commanded the gun department, as he said,

although that essential part of a warship's equipment, in the present case, consisted only of three revolvers.

Out over the phosphorescent waters the launch sped, and in a remarkably short space of time the *Electra* loomed up before the adventurers, lying in darkness except for the lights through some of the cabin portholes.

Harry stopped the engines, and the launch drew up to the lowered gangway noiselessly. One man only was on watch on deck.

"You vas late, Captain," this man called out as Brown brought the tiny vessel to rest by gripping the rail of the gangway.

"Yes," answered Harry, checking Mr. Reid with a touch of his foot. "We had a lot of trouble on shore, and we're as hungry as cannibals after a vegetarian feast." He mimicked Captain Williams' voice to perfection.

"Dat is shust as vell, sir, for dinner is ready," answered the man on deck. "I vas shust about to send off a rocket to show you our position—— *Donner unt blitzen!*"

Brown had caught the speaker by the throat and thrown him to the deck.

"It's Schnake," whispered Harry, as Mr.

Reid and he reached the scene of their comrade's prowess. "He is a good fellow."

"Maybe," answered the Scot. "Like another man that I mind o' in the history books, Brown has 'made siccar,' anyway."

"We're bosses already, sir," spoke Brown, arising. "All the men must be dead drunk or sleeping."

"I'm neither," cried a voice; "and I'll put your lights out pretty slick——" There was a scuffling sound, and two men rolled on the deck in each other's arms, perilously near the gangway.

"That's Hobson," said Mr. Reid; "and he'll strangle poor Brown if we don't interfere. Get up, you fellows! What is the meaning o' this unseemly conduct on board an honest ship?"

"Honest ship!" laughed the American. "I think old Reid could give it another name, and I'll go a few dollars my poor second could back him up. Hullo! Howling Mississippi! It's Brown I've got hold of——"

"You're a perverter of the truth," gasped Brown; "I've got hold of you."

"Ease off, lads," commanded Mr. Reid; "there is a mistake here. In the Captain's absence I'm in command."

"Reid's ghost!" yelled Hobson. "Old man, I had no hand in the business. Williams knew the people were cannibals, but I didn't; and Schnake and I were going to steal the launch and go back for your bones this very night." The American was certainly astonished.

"I'm no' a ghost yet, Hobson; but slacken your grip, or you'll make Brown one, and he's a real decent fellow. Here is your lamented second too, alive and well. I hope you've steam up and everything ready for shifting our anchorage——"

"Und you vas not dead!" cried the second officer, rising to his feet. "It is Mr. Reid I see in de flesh."

"Ay, but gey hungry," answered the Scot. "Get up, you fellows! Where are all the men?"

"Those who are not ashore with the Captain are asleep, sir," said Mr. Hobson. "But—but, Harry, my boy, is it really you? Speak, and tell me my senses are not playing me a trick."

"You are looking at your late second all right," spoke Harry. "We have had some strange experiences, and will in all probability have some more. Mr. Hobson, this ship is mine. Will you accept the fact and wait for explanation?"

"I'll take orders only from my superior," spoke the American. "There are not more than half a dozen men on board——"

"Then I am your superior on board this craft, Mr. Hobson," said Mr. Reid. "Kindly see that you have steam ready at once. Mr. Schnake, will you take orders from me, or——"

"Vith pleasure, sir; you vas my chief," replied the German, saluting. "But vere is de Captain?"

"You'll hear him howling on shore directly," muttered Brown. "But while you fellows are settling things here I'll visit the pantry, if you'll excuse me. Hullo! here are the boys tumbling out on deck. Now for the fun!"

CHAPTER X

THE TYPHOON

But if Brown really wished to see a fight he was disappointed. The men paused as they came out on deck, and stared wonderingly at those whom they had been told had been eaten by the natives of Willyam Shakespeare's island. They were all decent fellows, for the Captain had carefully chosen his shore party so as to include only the men whom he had already discovered were of his own type, knowing that the ship would, if anything, be safer during his absence in the hands of others.

Mr. Reid was quick to assume his position.

"Macfee and Harris," he ordered, "get forward and stand by the winch to raise the anchor. Bourke, kick up Obadiah the cook and tell him to serve dinner in the saloon. Mr. Hobson, will you kindly take the men of your department in hand and see that steam is available at the earliest possible moment?"

"All right, sir," the chief engineer responded, saluting. "But before I allow the engines to be started, I trust you will explain matters a bit. This looks very like piracy."

"But it isn't, Mr. Hobson," said Mr. Reid. "We're not sailing away; we're only going to run the *Electra* in shore in the meantime."

"Get below, boys, and shake up the fires," cried the engineer. And next moment the three adventurers, Mr. Schnake, and Mr. Hobson were alone on deck, the men all having departed to obey orders at once.

"While you are explaining things, sir," said Harry, addressing Mr. Reid, "I'll go and stand by the engines. We may be attacked by native canoes at any moment, and we are not strong enough to fight."

"Aren't we?" grinned Brown. "We can fight anything, and I'll bet we'll give any boarding party, white, or black, or both together, as good a time as old Socrates gave Williams last night. But if you don't mind, sir, I'd like to go and stand by the cook. These nigger fellows are mighty slow when they're skeered, and my presence may give him confidence; I've got a most persuasive personality."

"You have, Brown," the American agreed

ruefully; "but your grip is the most convincing part."

"Shall I take de ship out, sir, or vill you go on de bridge yourself?" asked Schnake. He wasn't troubled with a conscience that could distinguish between the rights and wrongs of obeying his chief in some matters, but not in shifting the position of the ship. Besides, he did not like Captain Williams.

"I'll handle the ship myself, Mr. Schnake," Mr. Reid replied. "You will be wanted elsewhere. Now, Mr. Hobson, what are your scruples? Am I not in command in the absence of the Captain, apart from any other consideration?"

"That's just where my knowledge of British law fails me," answered Mr. Hobson. "Now, on an American ship I guess I should know my duty pretty clearly, but my thinking machinery is out of gear in the present case. I don't know but that the right thing for me to do, according to British law on the highseas, would be to pitch you overboard and allow the sharks to settle the matter."

"Which I am vera willing you should try to do," said the chief officer grimly. "Sail on when you're ready."

"No fear; I'm not anxious that my sorrowing relatives should draw my insurance money," laughed the chief engineer. "I didn't say that I should try such an experiment, even if it were the right thing; I'm not a stickler for the law, but I am for duty."

"You draw vera nice distinctions, Mr. Hobson. I signed you on."

"Well, but, hang it all, you're dead! You're no longer chief officer; you're—I'm blessed if I know what you are, although I am more pleased to see you before me than I can say."

"But seeing that I've cheated the cannibals, no' to say anything about some other folk, and have come back to my ship as in duty bound, why should you not obey me?"

"Oh, I shall, old man; but there's something in this that I haven't gripped. But spit out your orders; the engine-room staff—at least, what is on board of them—won't fail you. I suppose you mean to steal the ship?" The American certainly was frank.

"No; a man can't vera well steal his own. This ship belongs to your second, and it was acting for him I was when I signed you on. Captain Williams sent us ashore on that other island to get rid of us for ever; he seems to

have found out that we knew his little game."

"But excuse me, sir. How did it come about that Captain Williams's name is on the ship's papers as owner?"

"Because he put his name there, I suppose, the same as you might do if you disposed of all the men on board not your own gang, and took the boat, under another name, of course, round to some New Zealand or Australian port. But I'm no' trying to enlist you in our services, Mr. Hobson. Nominally, I and Harry, as well as you and the others, are still under Captain Williams, and it is as chief officer only that I am acting now. When the Captain comes on board again, I have no doubt he'll approve of my actions."

"Well, of all the strange characters I have ever met you take cake, gold medal, and hat-box! How can Captain Williams come aboard if we sail away with his ship? Has he a portable aeroplane?"

"Maybe; but we are not sailing away with *his* ship, nor with any man's ship. Acting as a loyal chief officer for the owner, whoever he is, I am using my judgment to place the vessel out of danger. We are at a vera exposed

anchorage, although you may not think so, being only an engineer; and the typhoon which will roar in through that gap in the reefs presently will make the *Electra* a wreck, and be the means o' sending every man on board to answer for his sins if we can't get out of its track. Now, I know of a safe sheltering-place, and we're going to take the *Electra* to it, with or without her chief engineer's consent. She is too good a boat to be lost without making an attempt to save her."

"Great Mississippi!" gasped Mr. Hobson. "I'll get down to the engine-room at once. But how in thunder do you know there is a typhoon working up here? The sea is like glass, and——"

"I ken these islands better than any living white man, I honestly believe, and I saw the signs this afternoon. Man, have you no' observed that we're gasping for air, as if we were in a vacuum chamber this vera meenit, whereas there usually is a cool and pleasant breeze blowing at this time?"

"I can start at any time now, sir," cried Harry, standing in the engine-room entrance, "and steam is rising fast."

"Then stand by, and I'll go on the bridge.

Mr. Hobson, you will please go aft and smoke a cigar. I'll have no man work against his conscience, and I havna time to tell you more now."

"Conscience be blowed!" roared the engineer. "I'm going into the stokehole to help the firemen. I am a freeborn citizen of America, and I guess I'll stand by you until we're hanged at the yardarm, or have come out of this business with bands playing and colours flying."

He rushed below, and, obeying instructions, Mr. Schnake went forward to keep a look-out on the bows. The chief officer then took up his position on the bridge, and signalled to the men by the anchor-winch and to the engine-room simultaneously. The anchor was hauled up with great promptitude, and almost imperceptibly the *Electra* began to glide through the still waters, the gentle thud, thud of the pistons down in the heart of the ship alone telling that the vessel was in motion.

The night was dark, and the few stars still glimmering feebly were rapidly becoming obscured by great drifting banks of clouds. The air was oppressively hot, and in the engine-room Harry was gasping. What it was like in

the stuffy stokehole, where Mr. Hobson and two firemen were working like demons, he could faintly imagine. All on board now realised in a dim sort of way that danger was impending, and that Mr. Reid's coming meant their safety. To see ahead was now impossible, and only the spasmodic phosphorescent glow over the ship's sides, as she cut through myriads of jellyfish-like creatures, afforded even the knowledge that the *Electra* was really on the water.

But Mr. Reid seemed to have no hesitation in directing the vessel's course. Calmly he stood by the steering-wheel, smoking his beloved pipe, occasionally ringing down on the engine-room telegraph "Stop," "Ahead slowly," "Half-speed," and such-like signals. And now the roar of the mighty Pacific rollers, as they hurled themselves against the outer reef, rose above all other sounds, and the men knew that already the prelude to the typhoon had approached. The thunderous noise also showed, however, that the ship was perilously near the reef, but still the cool navigating officer made no sign indicative of doubt or hesitation.

At last a vivid flash of lightning split the heavens in two, and in the blinding glare which

filled the space between sea and sky all objects stood out in startling distinctness. Mr. Reid evidently expected the flash, and was ready to take full advantage of it. He swung the ship hard to starboard and rang down "Full speed." The air was highly electrical, and an expectant hush fell over all nature for a brief moment. Then another flash came, even more brilliant than the first; and again the steersman swung the ship round, signalling meanwhile to the German in the bows to watch the starboard as closely as possible.

"Port! port!" yelled Mr. Schnake, as a third flash lit up the world of waters. "Ve are on reef running out from shore."

"Not quite," answered Mr. Reid. "We will shave it by some yards. I was looking for that reef."

"I am free now, sir," said Mr. Hobson, appearing on deck at that moment. "The boilers are at full pressure, and the men below can keep them at that. What can I do now?"

"Connect up a searchlight in the bows, if you can do it without taking any men away from their posts," the officer answered. "What is Brown doing?"

"He's in the stokehole, trimming coal, and

making the little air there most decidedly sulphury with his language. You'll have a bow searchlight in no time, sir. Great New York! It's dark!"

"Ay, it usually is at this time o' night when there is no moon."

A terrific peal of thunder burst out on the still air, and reverberated and rebounded among the gullies and forests of the mainland for some minutes before rolling away in great waves of sound to the east. Then the rain came, warm, brimstone-smelling, and in a volume which probably would have drowned any living land creature exposed to the stupendous downpour.

But the stout awnings warded off the deafening torrent, and as it dripped therefrom into the lagoon, the *Electra,* for the time, was practically a submarine boat—water was underneath and above, and the film from the awnings completely enveloped her.

Still, her forward motion never ceased, and suddenly a brilliant ray of light shot out from her bows and pierced the yawning blackness ahead. Mr. Hobson had not been long in fitting up the searchlight, and the whir of the dynamos in the engine-room could now be

heard too. The lightning flashes shot athwart the sky without apparent cessation, and the thunder rolled in deafening peals, which seemed to shatter the whole fabric of the universe into fragments. The rain came down in a mighty flood, and Harry thought that all air had been sucked out of the world. Then Mr. Hobson came down beside him, grimy and soaked with perspiration.

"Get out on deck for a spell, young man," he said cheerily. "I'll stand by here for a bit."

"But the men in the stokehole?" Harry gasped. "They must be worse off."

"The men down in little Hades are seasoned Glasgow tramp-firemen, and you needn't worry about them. All hands are helping——"

"Stop!" clanged out the telegraph, and Mr. Hobson flew to the throttle. "Full speed astern!" followed quickly; then, after a minute, "Stop!" and "Full speed ahead!"

"What in thunder is the old man doing?" muttered Mr. Hobson as he carried out the orders from the bridge. "I shouldn't think there was much cross-channel traffic here, and I am open to go nap on the fact that there is no pier for him to try to take!"

He got no answer, for Harry had run out on

deck to fill his lungs with air, if such were obtainable.

"We'll manage, laddie," Mr. Reid cried out on seeing him, "but it will be a tight job. By to-morrow nothing will be on top of the water within a fifty-mile radius o' this place. I ken the symptoms well."

The *Electra* was headed straight for a gap in two great rocky walls which rose ahead, and which extended back into the heart of the island. The searchlight illuminated the passage very distinctly, and even as Harry looked the little vessel was struggling against the stream which flowed between the black rocks. Next moment she was safe from the impending typhoon. But could she force the torrent to a place where she might be moored? She could, but with nothing to spare, for the current held her firmly, and only foot by foot could the powerful engines force her against it. But steam power did it; and just when the men at the fires were about collapsing with their efforts Mr. Schnake's voice rang out:

"Dere vas von spleet in de valls, sir, on de starboard!" Only the noise of the rushing waters filled the strange ravine.

"Ay, weel I ken that," replied Mr. Reid.

"We're going to back into that split; we'll fit it like a glove, and remain secure unless an earthquake comes along."

He rang down "Stop" next minute, and deftly controlled the craft so that she drifted gently back into the basin out of the current. The *Electra* was now safe in a rock-girded pool, which seemed to be a backwater of the main stream. A current of air blew down from the mountains, and it was refreshingly cool and pleasant. Mr. Reid descended from the bridge and cried down into the engine-room:

"We're safe now, Mr. Hobson. Kindly call up the men from the fires, and we'll see what good things the ship's larder can provide."

The men came aloft, and wiped the perspiration from their faces. Some of them had been in a typhoon before, and well they knew the preliminaries of such a climatic disturbance. But they were amazed when they found themselves lying in a natural rock-locked harbour and experienced the cooling breeze from the hillside. As a matter of fact, the ravine was acting as a funnel, leading to regions above those affected by the depression, and conveying air down from cloudland

through the very heart of the atmosphere-exhausted area. And yet the typhoon had not reached the island; the thunder, lightning, and rain were but a prelude.

After dinner Mr. Reid gathered all hands in the comfortable, well-lit, and luxuriantly-furnished saloon, and informed them that though some differences had arisen between Captain Williams and himself, he did not ask them to declare themselves on either side. "Be faithful to the ship," he concluded, "and do your duty as true Britons. When Captain Williams returns, I will charge him with his crimes before you all, and you shall be judges between us."

"Don't you worry, sir," said Brown. "I've been telling the boys our little story, and there ain't a man on board now who won't plunk solid for you and the kid, unless, perhaps, the chief engineer, and I'll attend to him when you can afford to lose his services."

"Thanks, Brown," laughed Mr. Hobson. "I don't know that I should object to having a set to with you just to take some of that cheek out of you. All the same, I guess Mr. Reid has nothing to fear from me."

"Boys, do your duty by the ship and leave

me to settle my own troubles," advised the chief officer earnestly. "Afterwards things will rectify themselves, but I may not incite you to mutiny——"

"Blamed little inciting needed," growled Brown. "I'll go for old Williams when I meet him for what he has done to me, and after that you are undisputed boss——"

"Hullo!" exclaimed a sailor, "we're attacked! I heard voices!"

All rushed to the deck and gazed out at the wall of rock which almost touched the vessel's hull. The saloon lights lit the gloomy, damp face the full length of the ship, but nothing alarming could be seen nor heard.

"You are getting nervous, Harris," Macfee laughed. "Only monkeys could board us here."

"An', be jabbers! if Cyaptain Williams tries on any monkey tricks, with the help of the naygars, we'll give him the chance of adding little white wings as well as a tail," grinned the man named Bourke.

"An asbestos suit would be of more service to him," commented Brown. "Wings can't stand great heat."

The men returned to the saloon, for the

deluge of waters was now breaking through the awning in places and spattering unpleasantly on the deck. An intense coldness had also suddenly taken the place of the hot atmosphere experienced out in the lagoon, where, doubtless, the dreaded typhoon was now raging in all its fury.

"I beg pardon, sir," ventured Mr. Schnake after some conversation of a general nature, "but did you say dat de Captain has got de curios ve vas come for, already?"

"I don't think I *said* that altogether," Mr. Reid replied, "but my fears run in that direction. He got to the treasure-chamber of the ancient Okapites before us and——"

"Urar can guard his own. His idols are safe from mortal eyes in his own keeping——" The men turned quickly. At the foot of the companionway in the saloon entrance stood a stalwart native. His dress was a simple fibre kilt and large nose ring, although some feathers also graced his hair. He carried no visible weapons, and he surveyed the assembled men as coolly as if he were in his own house.

"Great Boston!" ejaculated Mr. Hobson; "where did he come from, boys?"

"Got 'em again," muttered a sailor, blinking

at the lone figure, "and I've only been drinking lime-juice too!"

"Mine Gott!" was the German's exclamation; and the remarks of the others, excepting Mr. Reid and Harry, were of that terse and emphatic nature common among all sailors. Mr. Reid did not speak. He was staring at the bold, English-speaking intruder in wonder and astonishment. How did he get there? Why did he appear to be so familiar with everything? What did his presence mean? And had he men behind him?

Harry, meanwhile, had rushed forward and grasped the native's hand.

"We are glad to welcome you to our ship, Socrates," he cried. "At first we were too much surprised to recognise you——"

"Blow me for a broken-winded aeroplane!" cried Brown. "It *is* Socrates! It is all right, boys; my friend Chief Socrates is A1 at Lloyds'. He's the King of the Cannibal Islands and——"

"Shut off steam, Brown," interrupted Mr. Reid, advancing to meet the chief with outstretched hand. "I'm vera glad to see you again, Socrates," he cried. "Just come into the saloon and I'll introduce our friends. Don't be afraid!——"

"Socrates was never afraid," said the chief proudly, walking forward with Harry, and paying no attention to the rather rude scrutiny of the men whom he did not know. He shook hands with all, however, as they were very ceremoniously introduced by Mr. Reid; and Obadiah, the ship's cook, hastily placed some food before him. To the surprise of all he used his knife and fork as if to the manner born, yet well those who had any knowledge of the islands knew that those useful adjuncts of a civilised dining-table were very much superfluous among the people of the tropical Pacific.

And Socrates also seemed quite at home in other manners, although he was troubled somewhat to arrange his kilt in a dignified manner when sitting down. At last he signed that he had finished, and Obadiah cleared the table. Then the men gathered round eagerly. They could not conceive how or when he had come aboard, nor could they understand how the chief of a notorious cannibal tribe should have acquired such perfect manners and such a knowledge of the English language. If it had been Spanish or German there would have been less reason for wonder, as the islands

had been among the earliest conquests of Spain in her great days, and latterly had become German property. But there was no British possession within many hundreds of miles, and even on the tiny, bird-resting spot, coloured red on the map, which did exist in that immense tract of ocean there were no English-speaking people. How, then, had Socrates acquired his English? for clearly he was not speaking parrotwise, as do many natives of the Pacific.

"Socrates," began Mr. Reid, "we are greatly honoured by your presence, and rejoice exceedingly that after all you have suffered you still had confidence to board a white man's fire-canoe."

"Oh, I wouldn't trust all white men," laughed Socrates. "But I saw you come in here, and knowing that it must be my friends of this morning I came on board——"

"You came on board since we got here!" gasped Mr. Hobson. "Have you a balloon, or did you come down with the rain?"

"I came down over the rocks, and along your mooring-rope. Only Urar and Socrates know the way. He tells me many things when I go up to speak with him. Big storm out at

sea to-night. One little trading-ship from Yap got in at sundown. She got beached safe in my village, and I must go back soon to buy some cheap pictures for my house. I will say my prayers to Urar when passing, the rain was too heavy when I came down——"

"What on earth is the nigger talking about?" asked Mr. Hobson. "Who's Urar? and what——"

"I beg your pardon, sir, a nigger is a countryman of yours, not a noble Ponapean," spoke the chief coldly.

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Mr. Socrates," said Mr. Hobson. "I didn't think you were so well up in the language as to be able to see the nice distinction. I apologise."

"It is clearing now," went on Socrates, ignoring the engineer's words and turning to Harry and Mr. Reid, as if to well-proved friends. "Come, I wish to show you Urar's Pool and pray with you to him for counsel. But I fear he will never part with the treasure, even to my friends."

"Didn't Williams get it?" asked Harry.

Socrates smiled.

"No," he said; "it is beyond the reach of mortal. Williams sailed in some canoes stolen

from my people for Willyam Shakespeare's island after sundown. The wind would help them; if not they will never reach land. He left some men to come out to this ship with a message, but my warriors caught them, and may dine on them to-morrow. But Urar is calling me now. Come, my friend, and see where the treasure lies; take it if you can."

"I'm coming, Socrates," said Harry.

"And I," said Mr. Reid.

"We're all coming to see the show," cried Mr. Hobson.

"No, only my two friends can see the sacred waters," spoke Socrates. "Come now."

CHAPTER XI

"TAKE IT WHO CAN"

"BUT I am one of the faithful, Socrates; you surely can't mean to leave me out of the picnic?" cried Brown. "I've adopted Harry too, and I'll shut my eyes if it is not right that I should look upon the blinding glory of the hidden treasure."

"What does my young brother say?" Socrates turned to Harry inquiringly.

"Oh, Brown is a good fellow. He stuck by us nobly, and he is really one of ourselves. Let him come too, if he wishes——"

"Look here, young man," broke in Mr. Hobson, "you are my second on this ship, and I guess I should have a little whisper in this affair. You haven't asked me for leave to go anywhere——"

"But you will grant it, sir," spoke Socrates. "Believe me: you will have no reason to regret it."

"And you can take it, Mr. Hobson, the laddie is now the owner of the ship," put in Mr. Reid; "and although he is still your subordinate according to British law, there is one little matter to which I should like to draw your attention, and, perhaps, Mr. Schnake can correct me if I am wrong——"

"Hang British sea law or any other law!" exclaimed the American. "I was wanting to make up a case to show that it was only a fair thing that he should use his influence with our gifted, but scantily clad, guest to allow me to join the little trip to the treasure-trove."

"Mr. Hobson," said Harry, "I want neither treasure nor ship, nor do I wish to be anything else than your second—your third, I fear, is lost to you now. I joined this ship to come here to look for my brother, and everything else, rightly or wrongly, is subservient with me to that quest."

"Hear! hear!" cried Brown, and the men applauded vigorously. Evidently they were with Harry.

"If you are not chief here even as I am among my people," interposed Socrates, addressing Mr. Reid, "why don't you fight

those who dispute your claims? The chief's words should be absolute."

"I don't know but that your idea is a good one," mused Mr. Reid. "What do you say, Mr. Hobson? Shall we put everything to the elementary test, and fight? I claim to be chief on this ship in the meantime; let those who object stand out, and my supporters and I will fight them."

"Good old chief!" sang out Brown. "Come on, boys, range alongside or opposite; I want to know the fellows I've got to persuade——"

"But I admit you are chief, sir," said Mr. Hobson, "and I don't want to fight you. My only fear is that the officers of this ship may be called upon to answer to the charge of mutiny or piracy afterwards."

"I don't think so, Mr. Hobson," Mr. Reid responded. "And here is one reason, apart from any claim that Harry here is the owner. We are in German waters, and if a German war-boat came along we would have to satisfy her officers that we were here for legitimate purposes, which might be a wee bit difficult for us to do. Well, we could fly any flag we liked, but we would be treated as filibusters all the same, and certainly Britain would disown us

as we have no right here. Therefore, we are beyond the jurisdiction of British law, and have to be a law unto ourselves until we strike a British port again, when any man who thinks he has a grievance can report it to the authorities."

"But we are under the Union Jack wherever we are," said Mr. Hobson. "Aren't the seas free?"

"No," answered Mr. Schnake, "dat is von mistake many people make. British seas are free to all, but not those under de control of other nations. America vatches the islands of vich Honolulu is de chief town, France keeps guard over New Caledonia und oder South Sea islands, and Chermany sends her cruisers to patrol de islands between 9° south unt 9° north of de equator. Ve are now in 7° north latitude unt 158° east longitude, according to British reckoning, und if ve are caught by a Cherman patrol ship vill be hanged."

"It's very comforting to know that," Mr. Hobson observed. "But if we only came here for shelter, or to collect geological specimens, or something of that nature?"

"Our papers make out that we are traders," said Mr. Reid, "and make no mention of

either curios or treasures ; therefore, while you remain on board you are safe, but if you are caught by the Germans stealing treasures or doing anything suspicious on shore, you are liable to the fate of filibusters."

"Why all this talky-talky?" broke in Socrates wearily. "My dress is not the same as yours and I am very cold. Urar waits for my prayers, and he will be angry if they are much longer delayed."

"Well, Socrates the second," said Mr. Hobson, "I move that you get those prayers off your chest as soon as possible, and while you are at the praying game ask that the typhoon we know is now kicking up blazes outside be kept up so that any wandered German cruiser may be sunk, or at least be forced to make tracks to some point beyond the Carolines. I'm with Harry, and Mr. Reid, and a filibuster of the deepest dye, and I want to come with you. The Germans can hang me if they like, if they catch me."

"Hear! hear!" cried Brown, and again the men joined in, the Irishman adding: "An' begorrah if they catch us they'll be moighty shmart people. We're for Harry the engineer, no matter what happens, an' Captain Williams

cyan hang himself or foight us with his gang if he loikes."

"And so say all of us," cried Macfee; "we don't care whether we're pirates, filibusters, or anything else, and if our pay is guaranteed we'll take all risks."

"Your pay is guaranteed," said Mr. Reid. "I will give each man a cheque now which he can cash in any Australian, Fijian, or New Zealand port for double his wages for the round trip."

"Then what is all the talk about?" asked Brown. "If any man who feels aggrieved would step out, I should be happy——"

"To say less and come along," interrupted Harry; "and you may come too, Mr. Hobson. I am sure Socrates will not object——"

"If he is your friend he is mine," said the chief, "but I should have a fight if I were you, and kill all who are not your friends. You white people are very silly in these things."

"Then, Mr. Schnake, you are left in complete command of this ship," Mr. Reid said. "And, men, I expect you all to back him loyally. There is nothing to do but to make yourselves comfortable and keep a good watch; we will be back, I hope, before morning."

"We'll keep this ship against all comers for Mr. Harry," called out Macfee, "but if you're not back before daylight we'll come and look for you and let the ship take its chances."

"Come," said Socrates impatiently; "the night is passing and my prayers are many."

"We're ready," Harry responded; "lead on and we'll follow you if we can; it's good for us all that the rain has stopped."

"That's a fact," agreed Mr. Hobson. "A little more of it might have washed Mr. Socrates white, for with all deference to his tailors, a cocoanut-fibre kilt is not very waterproof——"

"You white people speak too much," Socrates interrupted. "Come quickly or I must go alone. Urar calls and he has never yet called in vain."

He slid down a rope dropped over the side as he spoke, and Harry, Mr. Hobson, Brown, and Mr. Reid followed immediately. They clambered down the rope to the ledge which surrounded the basin, and then began to scale the rocks. Their work at first was easy, as the saloon lights of the vessel showed them their footholds, but after they rose above the level of the deck they had to trust to chance, and hope that Socrates knew where he was going.

The rain had now ceased, but darkness, thick and impenetrable, enshrouded everything. The roar of the torrent near sounded like the passage of heavy waggons over a bridge, but the deep boom of the breakers on the distant reef outside was like the continuous discharge of many batteries of heavy artillery.

But Socrates did know his way. He swung himself up the rock face by means of clinging tendrils of some form of vegetation, and the others kept closely behind him, Harry first, then Mr. Hobson, Brown, and Mr. Reid. Up, up they went by strength of muscle alone, until the twinkling lights of the *Electra* far beneath seemed like the red remnants of blown-out matches. The work was easy to Socrates, and Harry did not feel unusually pressed, but both Mr. Hobson and Brown were almost exhausted with their mountaineering efforts before they had climbed far, and only Mr. Reid's encouraging influence behind made them redouble their flagging energy.

The Scot climbed as easily as if he were on a ladderway and knew every foothold ; indeed, he was smoking all the time, and it was the glowing embers of his pipe that told Harry when he looked down that all was well. In

daylight the climb would not have inconvenienced any strong man, for he could have seen that the gnarled roots of dwarfed trees formed an almost perfect ladder up the rocks, and rested when he felt tired. But in the darkness they knew not where their next step might land them, and the knowledge that far below was a rocky ledge and a steamship did not comfort either of the two men who felt that the climb was more than they had bargained for. They kept their grips and struggled on. Their steps were haphazard, but their grips were sure, and the clinging roots were tough as bands of steel.

"I say, old man," gasped Mr. Hobson at length, "are we near the promised land yet?"

"Excelsior!" wailed Brown. "Excelsior!" He paused and gasped for breath.

"Sing that when you get to the top," advised Mr. Reid. "You'll find it easier then."

"We are nearly up to the path now," called Socrates from above.

"Yes, you are," said Mr. Hobson, "but we're not. Great Hudson River! I wonder what made me start on a game like this? I'll live a better life if I ever feel the deck of a steamer under my feet again——"

"Get ahead, boy," cried Brown. "I've got an important engagement somewhere up aloft——"

"Hullo! we're up," cried Harry as he was assisted on to a narrow ledge by Socrates. "Why, this looks very like the path that we climbed up to from the Moon God Pool."

"It is a branch of the same path," said Socrates the tireless. "We'll pass through a cave now to the main stream and soon will reach Urar's Pool."

"Just wait until I get a mouthful of air before you start, Socrates," implored Mr. Hobson. "I am quite willing to admit that you can lick me all to blazes at climbing perpendicular rocks in the dark, but I'd like to try you at putting in a new nipple in a water-tube boiler."

"You white fellows talk too much," again spoke the dignified chief. "Follow me, and say less."

"All right, old airy limbs," Brown said. "If a white man can't follow a black man, I reckon it's time he gave up building Dreadnoughts and started eating his weaker brother instead of fighting him."

"White man's flesh too salt to eat," Socrates

grunted. "Come, I am late for prayers now, and I must get back to my people to see that they don't eat the men of the trading ship which got in this afternoon."

He started along the narrow ledge before he finished speaking, and all followed. Soon he plunged into a hole in the rocks, through which a strong current of air was blowing, showing that a through passage existed. It was much easier work now for the white men to follow the indefatigable chief, and although they could not see, they ran blindly on after him, guided only by the "pit-pat" of his feet.

In time they came out on the other side of the rocks, and immediately above the main stream.

Dark walls seemed to close all round except on the side open to the sea, and the noise of falling waters echoed loudly throughout the gorge. Socrates scrambled down a fibrous ladder a few feet, and suddenly appeared standing amidst a cloud of spray with a lighted torch, which he swung vigorously to keep in flame.

"Come down," he said, "and do reverence to the great Moon God, Urar. This is his pool."

"He must be a bit damp," commented Mr. Hobson, sliding down beside the chief, "if he lives in there. My! what a waterfall! what a waste of power!"

Socrates had placed lighted torches in each man's hand, and the scene was most impressive. As Harry expected, and Mr. Reid knew, they had come out behind the pool fed by the waters of the cavern river.

The falling arch glistened in the torch light most brilliantly, and appeared like a moving mass of gems of every conceivable shade and colour, blending their translucent fires with exquisite confusion. The men were behind this screen of water, and standing by the side of the eddying pool.

"Would you believe it, boys, I'm hungry after that climb," spoke Mr. Hobson after a long silence in which each man contemplated the weird scene.

"It's an easy matter remedying your trouble," said Brown, handing him a tin of bully beef. "Fire away at that, but don't let Socrates see you; we robbed his store-room this morning or some morning about a year ago, or maybe it was ten years since; anyhow he might recognise the brand on the tin and——"

"Oh, dry up, Brown!" interrupted Mr. Reid. "In the presence of Urar——"

"I don't know him, sir, but I do know that we hid a fair amount of stores here and I'm about as sleepy as a snake. I'm not built to go for more than ten years at a stretch without sleep."

"Silence!" ordered Socrates. "In the presence of Urar man must be silent."

"But where is he?" Mr. Hobson asked. "I see nothing but big eels crawling about here; and where is that treasure we came to see?"

"Urar dwells in that pool," answered Socrates. "His glory is too great for the eyes of living man to behold. Many have sought to remove his treasure but they could not, and their lives went to appease the anger of the spirit of the pool, and their flesh to these crawling devils."

"How horrible!" Mr. Hobson commented. "But that treasure, Mr. Socrates? We couldn't even try to take it away because it isn't here. I'll bet my whiskers Urar would be poorer by a good bit if we could get our eyes on his valuables."

"Dinna speak rashly," Mr. Reid put in; "there is certainly something uncanny about

this place, and the old story says that a curse falls on him who touches the idols."

"Well, there is nothing here to touch that I can see," went on Mr. Hobson as Socrates muttered a long prayer in his own language to the deity in the pool, "so we shall, at least, escape the curse. But why did we come here? It was a big job for nothing."

"I told you that Williams had been here before us," said Mr. Reid. "He'll have the golden images with him, and is probably hiding them in the next island now. I know they were here. I saw them lying round this ledge we are standing on——"

"Williams has not taken away the old gods of the Okapites," interrupted Socrates, joining the party again; "no man can remove them from Urar's grasp. Once white men came here who seemed likely to do so, but the great Moon God called up an angry rising of the sea and their ship was driven upon the reef outside and wrecked. Again and again have attempts been made to find the hidden spot where rested the old gods of the Okapites, but without success, and only twelve moons back a large party under that man you call Williams came here to look for the treasure. But Urar was

all-powerful, and his strong arm protected the lesser gods. While Williams was here another party came in a fast fire-boat, and I believe did actually cast eyes upon the treasure. But again the god was all-wise. He made Williams steal their ship, and thus the leaders were left alone upon this island. They found the treasure, but what availed that? They couldn't take it away, and Urar dropped his magic spell over them, and ever since the devils of the pool have been feeding on their bones. Now you come, and this time I, Socrates, am chief of the last of the Okapites, having won my position by trial by combat as did our chiefs of old. But I like my young brother of the pleasant face, therefore I would save you from Urar's wrath for his sake."

"That's very good of you, Mr. Socrates," said Mr. Hobson, "and I am sure we all appreciate your kindness. Still, I, for one, am a bit of a sceptic where moon gods and others of a like class are concerned, and I should like to view that treasure in spite of all the curses your friend could shower upon me in a day. I've sailed on the Atlantic in my time, and I guess I'm pretty well seasoned to them——"

"I have already said that you can't see the

old gods of the Okapites," spoke Socrates. "Once they had been seen by white men Urar knew they were no longer safe, and he hid them. He you call Williams, a man whom I shall surely kill some day, came here by the secret passage from the Temple ruins this morning, but he was foiled. He thinks I have all the gods in the village, and, knowing my warriors can fight, has gone over to Willyam Shakespeare's village to enlist his warriors on his side——"

"I say, old man, you don't mind if I have a few hours' sleep while you are expounding things?"

"Sleep, Brown, if you can," answered Mr. Reid. "You'll find a dry place in the cave entrance."

"But are the blamed idols worth anything?" asked Mr. Hobson. "Does any one here know that they weren't made in Birmingham or some cheap German town?"

"The idols are made of solid gold and osmiridium," spoke Mr. Reid, "and I believe that some are also inlaid with pearls. I have seen them and I know what I am saying. If Williams has not removed them I am quite content to wait until Urar can be prevailed

upon to disclose their hiding-place. But I can assure you there is a curse upon them —a curse the memory of which comes back to me sometimes and makes me sore tempted to end my poor life."

"Please don't talk like that, sir," said Harry. "If this treasure has unpleasant memories for you, let us go away and leave it. Join me in the search for my brother, and I'm sure we can easily make enough money to serve our modest requirements by other means."

"Well spoken, my young brother," put in Socrates. "Leave the treasure of the Okapites to Urar, and come with me and build Dreadnoughts. My people will pay you well."

"Cheerful Chicago!" cried Mr. Hobson. "Build Dreadnoughts! Well, I'm—I'm typhooned! Socrates wants to build up a Pacific Empire after the latest European pattern. Come on, boys; let's take the job on; I've got some new ideas for 12-inch guns, and a fore and aft screwed aeroplane which I'll throw in——"

"You talk like a cheap phonograph," Socrates broke in coldly. "My people were old before yours were dreamt of, and why should I not try to raise them once more to a proud position among the nations?"

"With Dreadnoughts," laughed the American. "I must say, Socrates, there is a lot more of European methods about you than your speech. But why did you lead us here? We can't climb back over that precipice in the darkness, and if you have no other road I think I'll copy Brown's example and go to sleep till daylight."

"Every one sleeps who comes to Urar's pool," the chief said enigmatically; "some never waken."

"Grateful and comforting, that piece of information," laughed Mr. Hobson. "I wish I had stayed on board the *Electra*. What about to-morrow, Mr. Reid? I suppose the typhoon will have passed by the afternoon? Shall we go out to the lagoon again?"

"I don't think we'll go out for a good few to-morrows," the chief officer replied. "We have a lot to do on shore if we mean to find those idols before Williams returns."

"And Socrates now invites you all to his village, where you will be well entertained," said the chief. "It is becoming very cold here now, and I have said my prayers——"

"But you're forgetting about that treasure, old man," said the American. "You led us up here to show it to us?"

"No; no mortal eyes may look upon it; I led you here to show you where it was——"

"Then where is it? We're naturally a curious people, you know——"

"It is beyond the reach even of curious people. Urar is mightier than men."

"Oh, I don't know; we'll chance that. Where is it?"

"Where you can never get it. I am chief of the last of the Okapites, and it was I who put the gods of our ancestors in Urar's safe charge."

"You're mighty long-winded over the matter anyhow. Where are they? If we can't even see them you needn't be afraid that we'll steal them."

"I am not afraid. They are at the bottom of that pool!"

"I knew it; I knew!" cried Mr. Reid. "I thought my dream was true. Oh, laddie, I wish I had never brought you here. The place is cursed truly, and only more evil can come out of our waiting here."

"By gosh, Socrates!" gasped Mr. Hobson, "you've scored after all. I guess those idols are safe from our greedy touch as well as sight. In that black, swirling torrent they'll

lie for ever. We can't grapple for them nor can we dive for them. Come along and we'll see about that fleet of Dreadnoughts you want built. We must do something after coming more than half-way round the world."

"Yes," said Harry quietly, "we must get that treasure if Socrates will allow us——"

"The treasure is in there," Socrates exclaimed. "Urar laughs at man's puny efforts. Take it if you can, but remember the curse of the gods."

CHAPTER XII

THE CHANGING OF THE WATERWAY

For some minutes no one spoke; the music of the falling waters, the swish of the whirlpool, and Brown's snores drowned all night sounds; and the men by the dark pool had now grown accustomed to noises to such an extent that they did not even hear the roar of the overflowing torrent as it leaped the second time into the gorge beneath. The air was moist and extremely rarefied, and in the red torchlight the scene was strongly suggestive of some other world. Black, dripping rocks, clad with fern-like vegetation, shut them in on all sides but one, and that remaining space was curtained off by the graceful arch of water. Truly the great Moon God Urar dwelt in a secluded home, and the minor gods under his protection were as safe from the touch of men as they could well be; for who

could rob that fiercely gyrating pool of its treasure?

"If we *can* take the idols from the bottom of that pool, Socrates," said Harry at length, "how will that affect you? They will still belong to your people, of course, but we might barter for them."

"My people never saw them, nor do they want them. I, alone of all living men, have gazed upon them; but the dead are many. It is foolish, my young brother, to talk of bringing them to the light of day once more. Urar will take the lives of those who try, and these slimy, crawling devils we see around will feast upon their bones."

"Urar can keep his brazen images for me," said Mr. Hobson; "I guess I know when I'm beaten. I'd as soon try to stop Niagara as that waterfall, and I could have men and machinery there, while we can have neither here. The curse I don't count on worth a cent."

"I dinna ken," spoke Mr. Reid thoughtfully. "Remember, Mr. Hobson, there are more things in this world than are dreamed of in our philosophy. The curse is on them right enough."

"Then leave it for Captain Williams. Howling hurricanes! he must have a mighty big opinion of his powers if he brought us round to the other side of the world for some curios lying at the bottom of that pool. We'll wait and see how he proposes to get them."

"Maybe Captain Williams didna know they were at the bottom of the pool when the *Electra* sailed from Glasgow," Mr. Reid went on. "Maybe he is even more disappointed than I am."

"But how could he not know?" asked Mr. Hobson. "He must have known where his precious curios were before he went to the expense of engaging a crew, even allowing he stole the *Electra*."

"Maybe he was under the same impression as I was myself," Mr. Reid answered; "and it was with the knowledge, which I believed no other man possessed, that priceless chunks o' metal lay around this pool, not on its bottom, that I shipped with him as mate. I know these islands well, Mr. Hobson. As Socrates says, the dead are many who have looked upon the idols. He refers doubtless to his own people, but I can tell you that many an expedition has set out from Sydney to look for them, and,

so far as I know, only two of these ever even found this island. Of these, again, I believe only the remnant of one party saw the treasure, and of that remnant I am the only man left alive."

"You speak that which surprises me," said Socrates, before Mr. Hobson could make any reply or Harry could ask any questions concerning his brother. "I thought no living mortal other than myself had cast eyes upon the ancient gods of the Okapites."

"But I have, Socrates!" cried Mr. Reid, staring strangely at the native chief. "I saw them lying on this ledge. I was with a comrade, and the curse fell—— No, no, I cannot talk of that!"

"The gods did lie around this ledge," spoke Socrates. "But when I found them I feared that they might be stolen by the white man some day, so I gave them to Urar to keep. He has them now, and never more can they be seen."

"I don't know about that," said Harry. "You haven't answered my question yet, Socrates. If I can replace them on the ledge, does that necessarily mean that we become enemies?"

"My young brother and I will never be other than the dearest of friends," the chief replied fondly. "If you can remove the gods from Urar's charge, it can only be because he is pleased that you should do so. What Urar wills, who am I that I should object? But you can't do it, my brother. Leave the idols alone, and come with me and build Dreadnoughts."

"Afterwards, perhaps," said Harry. "But when daylight comes I mean to make an attempt to see those golden images."

"But how are you going to do it, young man?" Mr. Hobson asked. "You'll be swirled round like a spot of grease on a flywheel if you go into that pool; and, anyhow, we've no diving-gear with us. Give up the idea, Harry; you can't do it."

"I thought of shutting off the water from above," said Harry quietly—"at least, if not quite causing its flow to cease, to make it stop feeding this pool. The next step would be comparatively simple."

"Go on, laddie," cried Mr. Reid. "I ken you are worth any dozen engineers. If you say you think you can do it, we are all at your back."

"I think we can, sir," said Harry; "but I'll

be able to say definitely when I examine things at daylight."

"Very well," Socrates grunted, shrugging his bare shoulders. "If Urar is pleased, so am I. But it is cold here now. Come with me to my village and rest until morning. We go through the rocks behind——"

"No, thanks, old man," answered Mr. Hobson. "I've done as much mountaineering as is good for me to-night already. I wasn't cut out for a monkey; and I'll attend strictly to crank-shafts, pistons, and thrust-blocks in the future, if I ever get back to the ship. You can keep your gods, so far as I am concerned."

"Have you anything in the way of ropes in your village?" Harry asked abruptly. "I should like to make a pulley and block haulage system between the ledge on the other side of the rocks and our ship."

"Plenty of rope in my village," answered Socrates; "every ship that struck on our reef carried lots of rope, and I have them all. But you can't shut off the waters; they come from the top of the mountains in the heart of the island, and the power of man cannot stay them."

"I believe you, Socrates; but the skill of man might alter their course——"

"Not a yard. They flow under the ground, between deep, rocky banks, until they cast themselves down into this pool, through an opening which only I among living men have ever stood near."

"Less than a yard will serve my purpose, Socrates. Can you lead me to the hole in the rocks overhead through which the waters come?"

"Oh, don't be silly, Harry!" cried Mr. Hobson. "You can't close up the passage, and if you could the pent-up waters would break through somewhere else and cause an alteration in the landscape of Socrates' kingdom, which most likely would bury us as well as the so-called treasure."

"I don't want to close the water's exit," Harry laughed. "My intention is merely to narrow the aperture if possible, so that the water, being compressed somewhat, will take a greater leap and fall into the gorge below without touching this pool at all."

"I see your idea, laddie!" Mr. Reid cried in great excitement. "We can do it, too——"

"You might give a fellow a chance to sleep,"

complained Brown from the cavern's mouth. "What with thunder, and the roar of cataracts, and you people talking, and two or three dozen yards of eels exploring me, I can't dream about my new book."

"Hang your new book!" roared Mr. Hobson. "Do you think we came to the Carolines for your benefit?"

"Keep your wool on, old man," Brown retorted, "or I'll make you chief villain in my story instead of young Harry there. Blow it! It's nearly four o'clock in the morning now; there is that same old star sticking itself up over the Pacific somewhere. I can see it past the edge of our drop-curtain."

"The storm is nearly spent," said Socrates, "but daylight will not see the waters outside stilled. Until the new moon shows itself they will be angry, for they must obey Urar's will."

"Well, so long as old Urar plays the game fair and square he will keep Captain Williams and his merry men from interfering with us," Mr. Hobson put in, forgetting his statement in which he renounced all hopes of obtaining the treasure. "And if my brainy young second can only tell us how we are to grapple in the pool after we have made the fall miss its first

resting-place, I guess Urar will also miss some gods and Captain Williams some curios."

"I've missed my tobacco already," wailed Brown. "Some of these gods or devils must have dined on it."

"I don't propose grappling for the idols," said Harry, as Mr. Reid tossed a cigar to Brown. "I think it would be a much more satisfactory matter emptying the pool, if Socrates will allow us."

"Great Broadway!" exclaimed Mr. Hobson. "Do you calculate we can drink it dry? We haven't any pumping-plant. Guess again, young man; you missed the mark that time."

"I don't think I did," said Harry. "My hobby in the Old Country was electricity and hydraulics—if I may use the word; and I believe in applying natural laws to everything."

"But old Nature won't empty that pool for us, even if we make the supply run past it."

"I am inclined to think Nature will, and without even the use of any plant or machinery, although we may assist her by such means as are at our disposal. But do you object, Socrates?"

"I object to nothing my young brother pro-

poses," said the chief. "But if you do try to measure your skill against Urar's, I shall remain to pray for you when the end is near."

"Which is vera good of you, Socrates," put in Mr. Reid. "But I'm thinking that when Harry starts a job he'll carry it through against all the gods in the Okapites' calendar. I'll remain and fight for him."

"And so says Brown, a gentleman not yet known to fame, but whose dazzling brilliancy will yet scintillate throughout the civilised world," cried he who had been trying to sleep. "Poor old world-wandering, pen-pushing, deck-deluging, fire-fighting Brown will stand up for young Harry until—until he is knocked down."

"Oh, if it comes to fighting, I guess I can do a bit of that too," said Mr. Hobson. "And I opine my young second knows he can depend upon me. But you're not that length yet. How can that pool be emptied?"

"Very easily, I think," said Harry. "You say the treasure is really at the bottom of this pool, Socrates?"

"It is; I put it there myself. But you can't take it out, my young brother. Urar will surely curse you."

"I don't mind Urar much, if you don't object. And after we haul the images out, perhaps we can come to terms with you for them."

"Yes," said Mr. Hobson; "we'll build him a fleet of Dreadnoughts with which he can go and knock the nearest rival village into ruins in the latest European style——"

"I'm going down to my house for ropes," Socrates interrupted. "Any one wanting to come?"

"Not to-day, old man," cried Brown; "I've enough of your stores here already to give all a decent breakfast. Don't bring too many of your warriors back with you."

"You are another of those talky-talky fellows who do nothing," said Socrates coldly. "I'll be back soon after sunrise."

He ran into the cleft in the rocks which led up into the great cavern through which flowed the icy-cold underground river, and the four white men were left standing by the pool.

"Look here, young man," said Mr. Hobson, addressing Harry, "I expect we'll all be killed and eaten by Socrates' warriors before sunrise, or at least in time for their breakfast. Now, that is a detail compared with other things,

and it doesn't trouble me much; but what I should like to know is your idea. You know me well enough to allow that I am not a low-down skunk, jealous of your inventive powers, and I am mighty curious to know before we're eaten how you propose to get down to the bottom of that devil-infested pool."

"We'll not be eaten, Mr. Hobson," Harry replied. "Socrates is playing a straight game and would be very much grieved if he thought we still suspected him. He'll be back here to help us, I'm sure, as soon as possible, and I see no reason why we shouldn't have a look at the old Okapite gods lying under these waters——"

"Breakfast will be ready in twenty minutes," Brown sang out; "every man must bring his own knife and fork and serviette; owing to unprecedented business, the purveyors are unable to guarantee a supply of these articles, but perhaps we'll be able to get along without them."

"I wouldna wonder, Brown; we're adaptable sort o' people," laughed Mr. Reid. "Feed us as well as you can, for at morning light we start to chase Urar from the home in which he has dwelt for centuries. I think, Harry,

I've tumbled to your idea, and I believe you'll do it."

"Yes, but what is the idea?" cried Mr. Hobson. "I can allow we might, by blocking up the hole overhead, cause the water to shoot out far enough to miss this pool, but then how are we to empty it? We haven't pumps, and if we had, we might take a hundred years——"

"I don't think we'll take more than a few days, Mr. Hobson," Harry said, with a laugh which showed he had full confidence in his scheme. "After we make the waterfall clear this pool we'll simply syphon the water out. Look at the great drop into the gorge we have for the long leg; why, the air suction will be enormous——"

"God save the King and the President! but I believe you've struck it," gasped Mr. Hobson excitedly. "But I doubt we haven't got enough piping on board the *Electra*——"

"We don't need much, if any," said Harry. "Those trees which grow from the rocks underneath will act as our tubes, and we have only to use pipes for our short legs to reach to the bottom of the pool. We can easily make air-tight joints in the tree-stems——"

"I knew it!" cried Mr. Reid. "Harry can do anything. The pool is as good as emptied——"

"Hold hard, sir," Mr. Hobson broke in. "A tree is not a tube."

"Those trees are," said Mr. Reid. "They're a kind o' eucalyptus, and are as hollow in their hearts as some men I could mention."

"And we have but to bore holes in their trunks as low down as we can reach in the gorge beneath, fit our pipes into their upper stem as near the pool as possible, and our syphons are complete," said Harry. "I saw these were hollow trees when we were here yesterday."

"Well, I'll be water-tubed!" gasped Mr. Hobson. "To think that I've been an engineer all my life, and have had charge of some big contracts in my time, too, and yet a mere kid can show me how to divert mountain torrents, turn a seething pool into a tub, and——"

"Promise me, Harry, that you won't touch the idols when they are laid bare until some one else has handled them," broke in Mr. Reid. "You are clever, I know, but the curse is no' a thing engineering science can remove."

"Why, you are superstitious, sir!" cried Mr. Hobson. "I'll remove the curse all right. Harry can remove the water. But how do you purpose getting up to that hole overhead, young man?"

"By the inner route," answered Mr. Reid. "Socrates made another little mistake when he said that he was the only living man who ever gazed on the waters as they took that leap. And I am superstitious, Mr. Hobson; I have reason to be. I know the story of these precious lumps of gold and osmiridium hidden in that pool, and I can bear out the fact that he who touches them goes mad——"

"Roll up for coffee and cold wild pig," sang out Brown. "I've got roasted devil too, although it's by accident, for these land and water eels wouldn't keep out of my fire."

"Brown, you're about the best fellow I have ever known," said Mr. Hobson. "You attend to more important matters, while we waste our time discussing treasures, and gods, and curses, and other things."

The men gathered round Brown's fire and dried their garments at the welcome blaze, for although the night had been oppressively hot and close before the typhoon had burst upon

the lagoon, the rapid climatic changes which it caused now brought an intense coldness in the ravine, which, though sheltered, was still a natural funnel supplying cold air from the upper regions. The storm was raging outside with yet increasing fury, but the men behind the waterfall were unconscious of the fact; they could not hear the thunder of the mighty breakers as they lashed themselves into walls of foam on the surrounding barrier reef, nor would they have worried themselves if they had been aware of the severity of the storm. The *Electra* was safe, and the longer the disturbance lasted, the longer Williams and his gang would be kept away. But Mr. Reid knew that the vast ocean would settle down to tranquillity as rapidly as it had arisen, when the typhoon passed, and from the intensity of the cold air-current blowing past the waterfall he calculated that the first few hours of daylight would witness the disappearance of the terror of the central Pacific.

Sitting round the fire, ways and means were talked over until the first streaks of dawn shone into the gorge and rendered their flaming torches unnecessary. Simultaneously with the sun, Socrates appeared with half a dozen

"SITTING ROUND THE FIRE WAYS AND MEANS WERE DISCUSSED."

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warriors laden with ropes, and a great assortment of tools taken from ships that had been wrecked upon the outer reef from time to time. He was certainly a tireless man, but he was much more powerful-looking than his men, and several times Harry saw Mr. Reid staring at him very curiously, as if wondering where he had met him before.

But Socrates seemed to have appointed himself engineer-in-chief of the party, and refusing Brown's invitation to drink a jam-tin of coffee, he spoke a few words to Harry in an undertone, and signed to his men to continue their journey with the ropes, leaving the tools behind. Then Harry said:

"Mr. Hobson, will you take in hand the placing of a rope ladder and a system of block and tackle between the ledge through on the other side of the rocks and the *Electra?* Socrates has just told me that he will show me the way to the mouth of the waterfall, and help me to narrow it down."

"All right, young man; spit out your orders and I guess I'll see they're carried through somehow."

Mr. Hobson arose at once and followed the natives, and Mr. Reid and Brown, understand-

ing Harry's sign, did likewise. They had no fear of Socrates now, and they knew he had taken a liking to Harry, which explained why he wished him to have as much undivided honour as possible. The natives and the three white men climbed to the ledge which led to the tunnel through to the parallel basin wherein the *Electra* lay, and when all had disappeared Socrates said to his youthful companion:

"Come, I have prayed to Urar not to be angry, and asked him to take his vengeance upon me instead of you should he refuse to be pleased."

"But we have no right to the gods of your people, Socrates," answered Harry. "Why should we rob your people of that which belongs entirely to them?"

"Oh, my people are not really Okapites; these people are extinct, and only their gods remain. We are Christians now, and none of my warriors have ever seen the old gods. I am the last of the Okapites, and I said, 'Take the treasure if you can.' An Okapite cannot lie; but I like you, and believing you can take the treasure with your magic, I am here to save you from the curse of dread Urar."

"But do you really believe that the gods are cursed, Socrates?"

"They are not cursed in themselves, my young brother, but the man who first touches them is; he calls upon himself the wrath of Urar, their protector. But come, let us get up to where the waters of the mountain's heart gush forth. We have much to do, and soon the bad white men who would steal the gods will be back."

Harry wondered if there were really any difference, so far as the gods were concerned, whether it was Williams who *stole* them or his own friends who obtained possession, but he did not enter into the discussion of that point. He was beginning to understand that Socrates had a quaint method of reasoning, and, at any rate, he was his friend. He followed him into the rock cleft which opened into the gloomy cavern, and running up the inclined passage over many amphibious, wriggling creatures, the two men soon reached the bank of the underground river. Then Socrates turned with it and climbed over some rocks, and without a word Harry followed. For ten minutes they forced a rather rough passage along the strange river's bank and then broke

into another cavern. Socrates extinguished the torch he was carrying and said: "You see where the light is entering this cave? Just there is where this river rushes out into the free world."

"Then I think if we rolled all these big, detached boulders into the water just at the mouth, we would dam it back so much that the extra pressure would cause the fall to hurl itself farther out and thus miss the ledge below; a very little difference in the angle will do all we require."

Harry spoke hopefully, but he realised that the task was enormous.

"Listen, my young brother!" spoke Socrates, sitting down on a rock and pulling Harry down beside him. "Urar told me you would come some day, and said that I was to help you. Now you understand why I am with you? I do not know your friends, nor am I interested in them, but for you I will do anything, even taking the curse upon myself when the idols are again exposed."

"Socrates," Harry replied, deeply moved, "after Mr. Reid, you are my dearest friend. I like you, and your friendship is henceforth more to me than all the golden images ever

made. Help me to find my brother, Socrates, and we'll leave the things where they are."

"Your brother will be found; Socrates has said; but you must find the treasure first——"

"What! you know something of my brother?" cried Harry.

"And," went on Socrates, ignoring Harry's last words, "knowing that some day you would come for your own, and that the waterfall must be made to leap wider before you could set your magic to work, I prepared the first part for you. Look, in these rocks I have drilled long holes and filled them with powerful explosives taken from a ship. I knew how the white man called the strength of the gods to his aid, and all is now ready. We'll fire these fuses and the work will be done; those rocks will fall into the waters and they will rise and spring farther out. Are you ready, my young brother?"

"Socrates, you astonish me! Who taught you the use of explosives?"

The chief applied a light to several fuse-ends and as they began hissing and spluttering said:

"Come, now; we have just time to climb over to the big cavern before the river of the gods which has flowed here for thousands of years is changed."

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIGHT BY THE POOL

Too much astonished to make any reply, Harry again followed the strange chief over the jagged rocks into the vast cavern where with his two companions he had first swam the dark, mysterious river. He knew Socrates had made no mistake; but how a chief of a cannibal tribe on an almost unknown, and probably uncharted, Pacific Island had acquired the knowledge of drilling blast-holes in rocks, and of charging them with dynamite or some other explosive, was beyond his comprehension. Then, too, he showed himself to possess engineering knowledge of a high order, and had evidently prepared to cause an alteration in the course of the god's river in the only way it could be done. Clearly Socrates had wisdom beyond that of most white men.

"Perhaps it was my poor lost brother who taught him all he knows," Harry mused. "I feel sure we'll find him now that Socrates has said he will help us in our search. I wonder where he can be? Probably wandering among these islands in a trading-ship, as Mr. Reid said they both did once. But then, how could he be the owner of the *Electra?* It must have cost far more money than even a fortunate island trader could ever earn. I must question Mr. Reid on that point, when I get a chance——"

A sharp, whip-like crack, then another, and another, and another, abruptly broke in on his thoughts, then the great cavern became filled with low rumbling sounds which gradually swelled into a fierce, thunderous noise and seemed like to bring the rocks down upon them with the reverberation. Socrates stood and laid a hand on Harry's arm.

"We are safe here," he cried in his ear. "Stand close in to this wall."

A shower of boulders fell into the river beside them and splashed sullenly in the dark depths, and a fusillade of stones rattled against the roof, walls, and floor of the cave, and fell around them, then the noise slowly died away

into weird echoes, and Socrates stepped out from their shelter.

The silent water still flowed past as before, and the torch which the chief had relighted shed ghostly glimmers throughout the cave. Huge, eel-like creatures scurried into the river from holes in the rocks around, and sightless flying things darted aimlessly hither and thither until repeated dashing against the walls broke their wings or killed them, and brought them quiveringly to the ground.

Socrates ran down the tunnel towards the opening by the pool and Harry kept close behind. Suddenly they passed through into dazzling daylight, but for a moment Harry could not understand what had happened. The waterfall still screened off the view down the gorge and the pool still lay before him, but something was changed, for the pool was not now a maelstrom, and it had sunk considerably in its rocky basin, the wet sides showing where its swirling waters recently touched, and where by continual motion for countless centuries it had worn out a smooth channel underneath the surrounding ledge. But it had grown much larger in area, and the drenching spray had disappeared! And the noise now sounded far

off! And the branches of the tall trees which sprang from some soil-covered ledge half-way down into the gorge dropped heavily into the steaming waters. Eels flopped and wriggled everywhere, in the water, and on the ledge. What had happened? Socrates was muttering a prayer in his own language to Urar, and paying no attention to his surroundings.

Then, in a flash, Harry realised everything. The waterfall was now dropping sheer into the gorge without first resting in the pool. Socrates had calculated correctly, and the home of Urar had been robbed of its terrors. The pool, no longer in tempestuous gyrations, was settling down in its basin, and it looked larger because the falling waters which had obscured its outside half were not now there, but fully five feet beyond. In a few minutes the face of the landscape which had endured for a longer period than man could calculate had been changed! Nothing now remained but to empty the slowly-settling pool, and the treasure of the ancient Okapites would be laid bare.

Harry sat down beside Socrates and thought. The chief was feeling miserable, he knew, for had not he by his own hands prac-

tically given up Urar's spoils to the white invaders?

"Never mind, Socrates," he said sympathisingly. "We'll leave the gods alone even yet if you feel bad over the business."

"It is not that," said the chief. "Urar has left his old home and gone to dwell in the new pool in the gorge. See! look how those devils are scurrying away too; they know they are no longer under his protection. Only the old gods are left—and the curse."

"But we don't care for curses," said Harry. "Curses don't hurt white people——"

"You speak without knowing what you say, my young brother," answered Socrates sadly. "The white men only are affected by Urar's curse. But we'll not talk of that now. Perhaps he may curse the devils instead."

"Here are the men with more tools and long boiler tubes," cried Harry. "My! what a surprise they'll get!"

At that moment Mr. Reid, Mr. Hobson, Brown, and the natives appeared at the mouth of the tunnel which led to the back-water gully. They were heavily laden with long tubes, rubber hose-pipes, and many other appliances which might come in useful in the work of

diverting the waterfall and emptying the pool. As yet they could not see that the cascade now gushed into the gorge direct, and carefully they advanced to the pool.

Harry now had several ideas of how to do the necessary work, and he pondered over them deeply. He had not anticipated that the pool would be left so still when the waterfall overshot it, and he now thought that they might build a raft to float on the surface, and grapple for the idols from it. Again, he worked out that blast-holes might be drilled into the rock-face near the level of the pool's bottom, and the whole outward side blown up. This plan seemed easy if it were possible for men to work in slings lowered between the face and the falling waters, but then the pool would be destroyed for ever, and Socrates might not like that. On the whole, therefore, he decided that his original scheme of removing the water by syphon was the best plan, for although they might grapple, there would be several circumstances which might prevent them from recovering all the treasure.

"Here, where's the blamed pool?" cried Brown, and Harry started up. "Has Urar been working his magic already?" He laid down his load and stared at the overshooting water.

"This isn't the place," said Mr. Hobson; "we've taken a wrong turn somewhere in that tunnel and come out at the wrong place."

"But there are Harry and the chief!" cried Mr. Reid, standing mystified on the edge of the ledge. "Am I dreaming, or have I been cursed already? Harry, laddie, speak and tell me what has happened."

"Nothing more than we agreed to try to do, sir," Harry replied. "Socrates blew up the water passage above and you see the result. He had everything arranged, it seems, and now we have only to empty this basin."

Less than a minute sufficed to give the explanation, but it took a much longer time for the others to understand it fully, and when they did at last grasp the fact that half of their work had been done for them already, their exclamations of surprise and virile words of admiration for Socrates were extremely characteristic.

"You couldn't get the chief to drink up the pool now, I suppose?" remarked Mr. Hobson to Harry as they stood round the ledge surveying its quiescent depths. "A man of Socrates' calibre can do anything."

"You can work yourselves now," said the

chief, apparently not understanding Mr. Hobson's words. "I must go back to my village. I have to fight a warrior after breakfast, and he is strong and well skilled."

"We'll go with you," Harry cried. "We'll fight for you; your enemies are our enemies."

"Oh, I can kill the man myself; I will come back soon and see how your magic works, and to pray to Urar not to harm you."

"Then let me fight the warrior for you, Socrates," Harry entreated. "I am strong, and I have magic which already has helped me to overcome Willyam Shakespeare."

"Does my young brother think the great chief Socrates is a boy, or a coward?" remonstrated the chief. "I need no one to fight my battles. I must also see that my people don't eat the traders now in my village, and prepare my brave warriors to meet Captain Williams and Willyam Shakespeare and his men, when they try to land on my island."

Signing to his own men to follow him, he stalked majestically into the rock-cleft which led into the tunnel, the other end of which opened among the temple ruins, and the four white men were alone. Harry wanted to

follow, but Mr. Reid advised him against doing so, telling him that Socrates was easily a match for any native he had ever seen.

"And now to work," exclaimed Mr. Hobson. "You're chief engineer here, young man, and I'm not jealous a bit. What is first?"

"Mr. Reid and you can fit these tubes into the tree stems at an angle which will allow the tubes to reach to the bottom of the water; it is twenty-five feet deep—I have sounded it already—so you will have to join some lengths together. While you are doing that, Brown and I will lower ourselves over the rocks and cut out exit holes in the trunks as far down as we can reach. After that it is only a question of the capacity of the pipes and hollow tree trunks as to when the pool will be syphoned out."

"All right," responded Mr. Hobson. "This is a job I like. It is man, with knowledge, but little else, against Nature."

"Ay," observed Mr. Reid, "but it is a wee bit more than that. Harry is using natural laws to fight circumstances. Every one knows the principle of a syphon, but I don't think that living trees were ever employed before to act as long legs. Of course, when once the water starts to flow, any schoolboy knows it

will keep flowing, because of the air-pressure being removed and the suction of the falling water in the long leg being able to pull the fluid up the shorter one. But how are you going to start the flow, Harry?"

"With a hand pump and a length of hose-pipe," Harry replied. "As each tree is converted into a syphon we'll attach the end of the pump-hose to the hole at the bottom and pump water *up* the tree *back* into the pool. The instant we know we have established connection by water we simply remove our hose and the water will run back, and will continue until there is none left in the pool."

"I move we name you Socrates the third," said Mr. Hobson. "You've got more wisdom stored in that head of yours than the original had, even though he was a Greek and ended his life by drinking poison."

"I think Archimedes would be a more fitting appellation," Mr. Reid suggested. "He was the fellow who dealt with water-raising problems, if my memory is correct. But let us get started, for the typhoon is passing on, and Williams and a gang o' savages may come along before we've finished."

Soon afterwards the four men were at work.

Mr. Reid and Mr. Hobson connected up lengths of pipes until they were long enough to reach to the bottom of the pool, and then bent them at an angle until they rested against the stems of the tall, hollow trees which grew from the gorge below. Then they proceeded to bore holes in the trees to fit the pipes, making the joint air-tight with packing and mud. Meanwhile Brown and Harry had constructed a sling and lowered themselves into the gorge with all the necessary tools to bore out large holes in the lower parts of the same trees. They were completely drenched, of course, by the waterfall, but they didn't mind in the slightest. A halt was called at noon for some lunch which Mr. Schnake and one of the men brought up from the *Electra*. Then Harry and Brown went back to the top of the rope ladder which had been laid between the far tunnel mouth and the *Electra*, and hauled up a small hand pump, which Mr. Schnake and the man, on returning, fastened to the end of lowered ropes. Mr. Reid would not hear of more men being sent to assist them, nor would he allow the faithful young German officer to remain at the pool.

"You get back to the ship, Mr. Schnake,"

he had said ; "we're vera glad to get the lunch, but don't you leave the deck again. I'm no' giving you orders as your superior officer, understand ; but the ship is liable to be rushed any time after sundown by Williams, and you are the man in whom the owner has placed his trust, so see that you keep careful watch. We'll manage to dispossess Urar of his golden satellites all right, and you'll get your share of the plunder, as will all our friends, but the ship is in your hands and danger is not vera far away, I'm sure."

Thus it was only the four men who, when almost sundown, stood round the silent pool ready to start the strange syphons. They were tired and weary, and it seemed to Harry that ages had passed since he last slept. But he would not give in. Mr. Reid looked as fresh as ever, but the chief engineer and Brown were very much played out. So it was Harry himself who connected the hose pipe on to the first tree down below while Mr. Reid worked the pump, actually pumping water from the pool down the rubber tube, up the hollow tree trunk, and down into the pool again. When the bubbles began to rise on its surface, showing that the circuit was complete, Brown

shouted to Harry and the lad at once removed the hose-pipe and its mud packing, and instantly the water gushed out at the hole in the tree. He watched the outflow until he was certain that it was not only the fluid pumped in that was coming back, and then removed to the next tree.

An hour after sundown, exhausted, soaking, and hardly able to keep his eyes open, he was hauled aloft, having completed his work. From each tree base there was now issuing as much water as could pass through its connecting three-inch pipe in the pool. By morning the pool would be nearly empty.

Brown prepared more coffee, and Harry dried his clothes at the welcome blaze of the fire. Then the tired men stretched themselves out to rest on the ledge round the pool and soon fell fast asleep.

All night the roar of the overshooting waterfall sang in their ears, but once when Harry awoke he also distinguished a low, gurgling sound in the pool itself, and smiling to himself, he turned over on the hard rocks and went to sleep again. The syphons were working and daylight would tell a tale.

It did, but not quite of the nature expected.

About four o'clock in the morning Mr. Reid touched Harry on the arm and the lad at once sat up.

"We're trapped, laddie!" the Scot said brokenly. "There is a chance for you though yet; climb up to that ledge leading to the other tunnel, and get down to the *Electra*, and we'll hold the place till you are clear. Goodbye, laddie——"

"What do you mean, sir?" broke in Harry, ignoring the proffered hand. "If danger is near, do you think I am going to leave you to meet it alone? Surely you don't mean that, sir."

"Laddie, the light has gone oot o' my life this last few minutes. I thought I would have fulfilled my mission if I saw this treasure in your hands, but we've been betrayed. Get away at once. All that is mine is yours, and the name of the firm of lawyers in Glasgow which has my affairs in hand is written on this envelope."

"Mr. Reid, I'm not afraid to die, if need be, and I'd much rather die now than leave you to meet any trouble. In fact, I don't understand you altogether, but I am *not* going away from you. What danger is near? Can we not

meet it and take our chances? We've taken lots of odds already."

"There are natives in war paint watching us now on every side," said Mr. Reid. "And they are all armed with their spiked clubs, a sure sign that they are out for business. They are the advance guard and are only waiting until their comrades come up, when they will rush us. I wouldn't have believed Socrates wasn't straight."

"Socrates is straight, Mr. Reid, I'll answer for him. But shouldn't we rouse Mr. Hobson and Brown and prepare to defend ourselves? We are as good as a hundred dead men yet."

"We're awake," spoke Brown. "I didn't want to interfere with your getting away, lad; but it is a fact that we're watched now. I smell the beggars."

"So do I," said Mr. Hobson. "I know the smell of war-painted nigger too well, but I wanted the kid to get away safely——"

"Well, the kid is not going away," interrupted Harry. "And the kid will play his part in whatever game is on foot alongside his comrades, let the result be what it may. But we are very much exposed here. Shouldn't we endeavour to find some shelter?"

"Crawl forward and climb up on to that ledge which leads to the other tunnel," said Mr. Reid; "they can't see our movements in the dark, nor can they hear us on account of the roar of the waterfall. We've got our revolvers anyway, and maybe the good God will help us."

"We'll help ourselves," muttered Brown, "but I hope I'll be forgiven for taking life. I've never done it before; but I'd rather kill a native than allow him to kill me, especially as I know I would disagree with him afterwards, internally."

No one answered Brown's remarks, and without opposition they all gained the flanking wall of rock and climbed to the cross-tunnel ledge which Socrates had assured them was not known to the people. Lying flat on the narrow pathway, they drew their revolvers and waited. All knew now that they were about to be attacked, for the odour of the fighting warriors filled the air.

And they had not to wait long. Suddenly the cry of a *Li-Porok* sounded out from the entrance to the cavern on the pool level, and immediately answering cries came from the rocks above. Then a brief silence ensued.

"That is the cry of the Night Bird," Mr. Reid whispered to Harry, "and as there are none on this island you know what it means."

"It means that the cry has been adopted as the war cry or signal for to-night," said Brown. "Blow me if I don't feel inclined to let out a whoop too. Hullo! there they come. Suffering sinners! There's a million of them."

In the dim light of the stars, on the ledge round the pool a crowd of naked and painted warriors had suddenly appeared. Most had emerged from the cleft in the rocks, but some had come down over the flanking walls which Mr. Reid, Brown, and Harry had scaled when they first left the brink of the seething whirlpool.

And now pandemonium broke loose; yells and shrieks of anticipated triumph sounded out shrilly above the song of the falling waters, and in a moment the pool was surrounded with ferocious and fully armed warriors.

"Stars and stripes for ever!" ejaculated Mr. Hobson. "I never knew the Pacific Islands could produce men of that size. Why, they could eat a German regiment——"

"And they would like to eat us, too," Mr. Reid muttered. "Look at them. They've just missed us."

And so it seemed. The warriors ran round the pool with clubs uplifted, ready to strike at whatever they saw; but nothing was there, and in the crush, ever increasing as more men came through the mountain or descended from the rocks above, many were pushed into the pool. Their cries were unheeded, however, and their comrades continued their mad race around. They were out for blood and they meant to have it, but their victims were not there. They were only a foot above the level of their heads, but the savages were not aware of that fact.

"Well, well!" murmured Mr. Hobson. "Socrates is only a cannibal chief after all; I suppose this is Urar's dread curse?"

"I'll bet my old razor I see our friend Willyam Shakespeare among the mob," said Brown. "How about pumping a pill or two into him with our lead-squirters? It would do him good."

"Stop!" ordered Mr. Reid, "we'll need all our shots for other purposes. This is not an attack by Socrates and his men; it is a gang of raiders from Shakespeare's island engineered by Williams. Look, there is the treacherous sinner himself standing in the rock cleft with

Clancy, Woods, and some others of his precious crowd——"

"I guess I don't mind ventilating the skunk myself, now," said Mr. Hobson. "He has forfeited all claim to be my superior, and deserves to be shot like a dog."

"But where can Socrates be?" asked Harry. "He expected these people to invade his shores, and left us to prepare to meet them. He must have been defeated in his fight with the challenging warrior, or else these men have cut up his army. I'm going to fight my way down to his village to see."

"You needn't, laddie," said Mr. Reid. "Socrates is here, and he has his warriors with him. Lie still and you'll see a fight in which sheer strength of muscle will win, unless Williams and his renegades shoot down the natives with their weapons of civilisation."

"Where is Socrates?" asked Mr. Hobson, "and why is he here with these warriors from the other island?"

"It is too dark to pick him out among the crowd," answered Mr. Reid, "but I heard his voice a moment ago. He is not here in alliance with Shakespeare's men; he is here to fight them."

"Jerusalem! gasped Brown. "The niggers are slaughtering each other! My! There goes a dozen over into the gorge!"

"I understand now," cried Harry. "There are two parties of natives down there and they will all be annihilated. Oh! another struggling crowd has just toppled over into the gorge. What awful cries!"

"And I guess the old pool is about filled with warriors, too," chuckled Mr. Hobson. "Look at that big fellow going round and smashing the heads of the beggars who are trying to scramble out. I guess he can handle a club all right."

"Can we not stop this terrible slaughter?" exclaimed Harry. "These cries will ring in my ears for ever."

"Laddie, be thankful that the darkness hides the sights from you," Mr. Reid said. "I fancy there will be nearly as much blood as water in the pool now. Urar is exacting his full tribute."

"Hullo! some one has lit a torch," cried Brown. "Great Caroliners! There is Socrates in the very act of pitching Willyam Shakespeare over the rocks. And look! there is Captain Williams rushing at Socrates with levelled

revolvers! Ah! the brute is firing—Socrates is down—No! he's up again! Come, boys, we must take a hand in this. Hullo! where's Socrates now?"

"And where's Harry?" cried Mr. Hobson; "he's not here!"

CHAPTER XIV

TO THE RESCUE

"WHAT are you saying, man?" cried Mr. Reid, standing erect and striving to pierce the darkness with his searching gaze. "Harry, laddie, where are you?"

But no answer came, and as the Scot stood, a deadly fear came over him, and his heart almost ceased to beat. Was this the end of their quest? Had they come to the cursed land of the Okapites only to see that poor handsome brave Harry should become a victim to the angry Moon God? He groaned aloud.

"It is fate!" he muttered brokenly. "Mr. Hobson, you and Brown can go back to the ship now, and sail away, or do as you please. I'm going into that pool after Harry."

"Great Columbus, man! who said Harry was in the pool?" exclaimed the engineer. "I'll bet he has tumbled to some game that

he means to play out himself. See, the circus is over now; there's not a man down there except dead ones, and the ghost pool is filled with them, I'm sure."

"But he didn't pass me," wailed Mr. Reid. "The road to the *Electra* would have taken him over me."

"The lad didn't go to the ship," Brown said. "I heard him shout some words when Socrates went down, but the din drowned what he said. Anyhow, while you two are arguing I'm going after him. I'll keep him company if he crosses the real river into shadowland." Brown leaped down from the ledge as he spoke and ran round the now deserted pool. Daylight was just beginning to break into the gorge. "Your murdering water-hole is empty except for dead niggers; and I can see your cursed idols," he cried. "I'm going to drop Brown's curse on some other people, and I'll bet it will be as effective as Urar's."

He rushed through the rock-cleft, shouting loudly on Harry.

"Wake up, old man," spoke Mr. Hobson; "the lad isn't dead and the pool is empty."

"Man, do you think I care for golden images or material treasure of any kind?" Mr. Reid

interrupted. "Providence put the laddie in my charge, and it was for him I was working. Ay, it was for him I lived. Keep the treasure——"

"Hang the treasure!" broke in the American. "Do you think I place it before my young second? I like the lad, and may I never swear at a fireman again, or be able to, if we have not him with us before long. Come on, old man; get out your shooter and we'll follow Brown. I expect he knows where Harry has gone."

Meanwhile, Harry, unconscious almost of his actions, was swimming the black, icy-cold river of the cavern. He had but one object in view, and that was to rescue Socrates. While the fight round the pool had lasted his eyes had never left the cultured chief. He had quickly grasped the meaning of everything. Captain Williams had returned with an army of Willyam Shakespeare's warriors, in addition to his own men, and Socrates had followed them up with his picked fighters and mixed with the invaders in the darkness. Shakespeare's men were hopelessly surprised when they had emerged upon the pool and found themselves attacked by those whom they had thought were

comrades, and Urar received a lavish offering of sacrifice for his many subordinate gods and devils now in the gorge. When the torches had lit up the scene of carnage, too, Harry had noted that the white men remained immune from all danger from either side, and this fact occasioned him some thought. But the reason soon came to his quickly-working brain. Shakespeare's warriors knew them, and Socrates had already issued orders that the white men—meaning Mr. Reid and his party, of course—were to have the freedom of the island.

Thus Williams and his own gang were allowed to mix among the fighters without risk, and shoot down any warriors they thought were not working in their interests.

Evidently Williams had been as much amazed as any one at the strange turn affairs had taken, and it had caused him some minutes' thinking to arrive at the same solution as Harry had already worked out. Then he determined upon his plan of action, and put it into practice at once by advancing upon Socrates and shooting him at close range. Harry was roused almost to madness on witnessing this cowardly deed, but despite his feelings he

"HE PITCHED WILLIAMS HEAD FIRST ALONG THE LEDGE."

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remained still, as his duty to his comrades compelled him to refrain from drawing attention to them. Socrates fell at the fourth shot but quickly rose again, and grappling with Williams, pitched him head first along the ledge, where he fell upon a pile of prostrate warriors. Then he collapsed himself, and Williams arose from his soft bed and cried something in the native tongue which had the effect of drawing off all the fighters. Half a dozen warriors, acting under his orders, had raised Socrates upon their shoulders, and almost instantly the space around the pool was cleared of all living men.

Then Harry cried out to Brown, who was nearest him: "I'm going after them. Socrates is not dead, but his warriors are tricked." He had leaped from the ledge as he spoke without having attracted the notice of his comrades, and was now following close behind the retreating natives.

And soon he was among them. He knew that if he kept out of Williams' sight and did not run up against any of the *Electra's* old crew he would be safe as far as the natives were concerned, for the dead Shakespeare's warriors would not know him from their white

friends, and the followers of Socrates would not harm any white man—at least, not until a new chief had been appointed. The natives paid no attention to Harry, but jabbered to each other in an unintelligible jargon as they negotiated the weird mountain tunnel. Nevertheless, the lad noticed that occasionally one warrior, discovering that his fellow was not of his people, would suddenly spring upon the other and batter his brains out with his club. But the event did not trouble the bulk of the retreating forces. Indeed, no one seemed to notice these little affairs, although one result was that the body of men who emerged from the subterranean passage among the old temple ruins was much smaller than that which had entered at the Moon God's Pool. And Harry himself had helped considerably in the reduction process, for as the contending warriors invariably showed on which side they were by shouting words resembling Socrates, or Shakespeare, he had no compunction about lending a hand to the man with the former war-cry when he appeared to be in difficulties.

The warriors did not hesitate when they found themselves safely through the uncanny passage. Those from the neighbouring island

had now no chief to obey, so they unanimously decided to steal as much plunder as possible and return to their own homes, especially as the sea was now quiet again and the sun was shining brightly over all. The other party, realising that they would also require to appoint a new chief in place of Socrates, made a frantic race down the wooded hill slopes to their own village; perhaps each man thought he had a chance of the chieftainship himself if he could first win the sleepy priests to his side, or it may have been that they merely rushed to their village to defend it against depredation.

Thus the white men and Socrates were left by themselves among the ruins, and Harry secreted himself in a half-covered vault adjoining the one into which the unconscious chief had been carried. He could see through into the prison cellar, and he smiled grimly as he realised that he could also push the muzzle of his revolver through a crack in the walls. But he could not reasonably hope to fight all the white men single-handed, so he sat down on the ground and tried to think out what Mr. Reid would do under the circumstances. He knew Brown would simply

rush at the crowd and take all risks without any thought; but such policy would not do, as it certainly could not help Socrates if he were a prisoner with him, a result almost certain to follow any rash action. But he could wait and watch for a chance, and at least he could shoot six of the renegades should there be no alternative. Captain Williams began to speak and he listened intently.

"Well, gentlemen," said Williams, addressing his companions, "we are at least having an exciting time, and plenty of healthy exercise, if nothing else, and in this twentieth century one has to be thankful for small mercies. Still, I am worried about Reid and the youngster; we know they were at that pool, and we hoped to put them out of existence, with their native friends, last night, so as to leave us indisputed masters of the place. Did any of you spot them among the warriors who somehow got among our savages? Reid is the very man who might paint his skin black and mix with the natives, and from what our late, but not much lamented, friend Willyam Shakespeare told us, the youngster is a bit of a terror, too."

"It doesn't matter much anyhow, sir," observed Woods, lighting a cigar. "We know

that the treasure has been shifted, and that this black-faced gentleman lying at our feet is the only person who knows its whereabouts. We'll make him tell and then go and get it. The chances are that old Reid was among those painted warriors who got among us and played sheol with our boys at the pool, and as likely as not he is now dead. If he is still drawing breath we'll cut off his air supply sooner or later, for there can't be much fight left in him now."

"But what about the old ship?" asked the man Nelson. "I couldn't see her riding-light last night, and I ran nearly halfway round the beach."

"Oh, Schnake would see the typhoon coming and shelter her somewhere," Williams replied. "He is a smart fellow although he is a German, and we'll have to lose him somewhere, too. He might tell tales when we reach some civilised port. I am afraid we'll also have to pick up another engineer or two at Suva, or Auckland, for Hobson is another fellow we'll be better without. "We'll be very short-handed when we sail away, boys, but it means all the more plunder for you. Ah! our prisoner is coming round now. I'll soon pump him dry.

I know his lingo as well as I know most European languages."

"You are certainly gifted in that line, sir," said Woods. "Isn't it funny that such a lot of brainy men like yourself should take to the bad, like a fly to treacle?"

"Indeed, Mr. Woods," sneered Williams, "I wasn't aware you were a philosopher. But when you acquire a wider knowledge of this world and its people you'll be able to understand some things better. In this life every man is for himself; anyway, he'll have to answer for himself at the last roll-up—if there really is a Day of Judgment elsewhere—and he is an idiot if he takes upon himself the burdens of a so-called conscience, which is merely a handicap he places upon his own advancement. Good and bad are only relative terms which change their meaning as time goes on, as readily as governments, dynasties, or empires give place to others stronger than themselves."

"Oh, I'm with you, sir, in all you say," laughed Woods. "I haven't got a conscience. I knew a fellow in Glasgow who had ideas something like your own, but the police got hold of him, I believe, for passing counterfeit five-pound notes, just as we sailed."

"What was his name?" Williams was strangely interested, but the men were showing signs of being bored.

"Gilson was what he called himself, but I suppose he could change his name as easily as those empires and governments you mentioned——"

"Gilson was a fool," interrupted Williams. "I knew him slightly. He presumed too much on his smartness."

"Say, boss," broke in one of the men, a fireman, "what is the next move? I don't suppose we're to wait here all day?"

"No, Smith; thanks to the mandate issued by our prisoner, according to information, all white men are to be unmolested on this island. He didn't mean us to be included, however, but his people don't know that. You fellows will therefore go down to the village and rescue our two comrades who are prisoners in the chief's house. I should leave them there to be eaten for allowing themselves to be caught while bearing a message from me to Mr. Schnake, telling him of our proposed visit to the other island, were it not that the *Electra* will be so much undermanned. Go, Mr. Woods; take every man with you, and bring them back here.

I'll have a little talk with our scantily clad hostage while you are away, after which I may put him out of further suffering. Get away now; are not my orders plain?"

"They are, boss," grinned a man, and Mr. Woods saluted, and without a word led the men out into the warm sunlight. He knew Williams well, but what he thought he kept secret.

And now Harry had only one man with whom to deal, and hope rose high within him. His chance would come soon. He noted that strong cords had been passed round the chief's body, binding his arms to his sides. Evidently Williams felt safer with his prisoner doubly helpless.

"Wake up, your Lord High Mightiness!" Williams cried. "I want to discuss some little private matters with you."

"My name is Socrates," said the chief, rolling over. "Why am I bound? And what do you want with me?"

"I—er—I beg your pardon," stammered Williams. "I didn't know you understood English, and I thought you were unconscious. Where did you acquire your knowledge of the language?"

"That is no concern of yours. What have

you to say to me? Speak quickly, for I am needed among my people."

"Possibly, but I need you, too. When did you become chief of the people of this island?"

"When Tick-tick Tommy fled to Willyam Shakespeare's island."

"Oh, you mean old Nogood. I remember now some traders dubbed the greedy cannibal Tick-tick Tommy. Why did he leave his own people?"

"Because I fought him for his position and would have killed him had he remained here. I am Socrates——"

"Yes, yes, I know that, you told me already. I thought I had met Shakespeare's second in command last night before. I am afraid he will be reinstated by this time, Socrates, and be chief of both islands. Your old rival, Willyam Shakespeare, died rather suddenly a few hours ago, as I think you are aware."

"He was a crow, his heart was evil, and his tongue was false. The devils will pick his bones——"

"Perhaps, and he'll likely poison them. But to come to the point, Socrates. You know where the old idols of the Okapites are hidden, I believe?"

"Yes, it was I who hid them. Many white men sought for them and Urar called on me to help him, so I gave them into his own keeping——"

"Go slow a bit; I was told in a letter from an old friend of mine, called by your people 'Kill-kill Frenchy,' that they rested on a ledge round that pool where you met with—er—your accident recently."

"They did, but Kill-kill Frenchy can't get them now."

"Why? Are they beyond man's reach, or is the secret one that I cannot prevail upon you to disclose?"

"He is dead. Tick-tick Tommy ate him. The devils will eat you, because I do not touch human flesh——"

"Dead! Do you mean that it was after he found the treasure you and Tick-tick Tommy fought for the chieftainship, and that meanwhile your predecessor had made a meal of my old chief?"

"The words you speak are of no interest to me," said Socrates. "Listen to the noise of battle down in my village. If I am not there at once all your people will be killed. I hear my warriors' war-cry."

"Well, let them be killed; who cares? There will be more plunder for myself. Now where is that treasure?"

"The treasure is cursed. He who first touches it is blasted by Urar and becomes mad."

"I can curse a bit myself, I'll risk Urar's best selection in that line. Where is it?"

"At the bottom of Urar's Pool, round which your men fell like leaves through the night."

"Ah! that reminds me I owe you something, Socrates, for the rough way in which you handled me. Now that I know where the treasure is I can get my men and grapple for it; but do you know what I am going to do to you?"

"What you do any pig can do; Socrates does not care. But there are white traders in my village and I must go to protect them. My warriors will be angry now——"

"Traders! What kind of traders come round here at this time of year?"

Williams was surprised.

"Oh, the same kind as you, I suppose. I have seen one of them before, and know he is a bad man; but cut these cords and let me go. I am hungry and I may have to fight

Tick-tick Tommy again. What are you laughing at? I have no time to waste with you. Let me go."

"All right, Socrates, I'll let you go, but first I am going to put a proposal before you, and an alternative. You are one of those people who cannot lie, I believe; therefore, give me your word that you will place the old gods of the Okapites on board my steamer—of course, you can use your own men to get them as much as you like—and I'll allow you to limp away as best you can——"

"And the alternative?" Socrates asked coldly.

"Well, the alternative is not really in your hands," Williams laughed. "It is simply this; if you don't promise, I will pay you back for what you did to me last night by cutting off your ears, and fingers, and toes. I may also do something else in that line, but how does that strike you to begin with?"

"Oh, my people could easily beat that. You are only a pig yourself, and I spit in your face. Socrates is not afraid to die; he is the last of the noble Okapites; but my brave young white-face brother will see that my spirit does not long dwell in the land of mists unavenged. He will kill you, and the devils

"HE RUSHED ON THE LAD WITH THE GLEAMING STEEL IN HIS UPRAISED HAND."

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of the pool will eat you; then I shall be allowed to enter the happy lands beyond the stars where dwell my ancestors——"

"Then your young white-face brother, wherever he is, will have to hurry, for I don't intend to remain here after I get your idols and——"

"And the young brother is here!" cried a voice, and Harry burst into the vault. He had left his own shelter when Williams had made his diabolical speech, and, unable to stand the strain any longer, had determined to precipitate matters. And he was none too soon, for the evil look in Williams' eyes just at the moment of his entrance was horribly suggestive of his fell purpose, and the knife in his hand was also significant.

He swung round with a startled oath on hearing Harry's voice, but almost without a second's pause rushed on the lad with the gleaming steel flashing in his upraised hand. Socrates uttered a cry of anguish, and flung out his feet in an endeavour to trip the would-be murderer; he had not dreamt that his young friend would have so imperilled himself on his behalf, or he would never have called upon him even in thought. But Harry was

now as cool as if it were a harmless trial of skill which lay before him, and he even smiled to see that Williams seemed to have lost all reason on recognising him. He fired at the blade in his opponent's hand when it was just at the moment of descending, and then, without hesitation, flung his smoking revolver in Williams' face, and closed with him. But his aim had been true, and it was a man with a shattered wrist and without the knife that he had now to fight, and a man almost blinded from the effects of receiving a heavy revolver flung full in his eyes.

Socrates wriggled to the fallen knife, and seizing it in his teeth, began to saw through his bonds with feverish activity. If his dearly-beloved young brother could only hold out until he had freed his hands—well, Williams' tenure of life would be short.

But it looked as if Harry had no chance of holding out even some seconds. Williams was an exceptionally strong man, and he was mad with rage and pain. Snarling like a dog, he threw his powerful arms around the slimly-built lad and raised him on high, then with all the great strength at his command he hurled him to the ground. But strange to say, Harry

landed lightly on his feet, and had sprung at Williams' throat again, before the latter had had a moment to regain his breath. He had forgotten all about his foil-tipped sleeves and concealed battery; indeed, it probably was out of action by reason of the wettings he had received of late. But the grip he fastened round the man's throat had a wonderful amount of trained strength behind it, and for a moment Williams gasped, and staggered blindly. The next he had wrenched Harry's hands apart, and clutched him in a vice-like hug that seemed likely to crush every bone in his body. But it didn't. Somehow Harry slipped down through his arms, and leaping up instantly, administered a terrific blow between Williams' fast closing eyes, which caused the recipient to reel back against the wall of the vault. Wildly, and cursing horribly, he recovered himself and again rushed at his agile opponent, and this time he caught the lad in his arms and dashed him with all his strength against the wall. Harry did not save himself so well this time; his strength was becoming exhausted, and he collapsed in a heap when he struck the hard formation. But he was not beaten, and almost instantly was on his feet again, gasping to regain his breath.

"Ha! I've got you now," Williams spluttered. "You—you——"

His rage, choking him, cut off the torrent of abusive language he was uttering, and he drew a revolver with his left hand and fired point-blank at the crouching lad. But his aim was bad; doubtless he was not used to left-hand revolver work, and even while he was blindly discharging the shots, Harry threw himself at his feet and tripped him up.

Williams lay still and Harry ran over and cut Socrates free.

"Come, Socrates," he cried, "let us get away before his gang come back."

"They will never come back," said the chief, grasping Harry's hand fervently. "Run to your people and tell them my warriors are mad, and that I fear trouble. I will follow you after I make an effort to calm them. Run! Don't wait, your friends' lives may be in danger now."

CHAPTER XV

HARRY FINDS HIS BROTHER

HARRY looked at Socrates for a moment in non-comprehending wonderment. Then in a flash it all became clear to him. Socrates no longer had his warriors under control; probably Tick-tick Tommy was now chief of both islands, and he would at once bid for popularity by joining his two forces and attacking the white men. And he had left his comrades by the pool open to any danger. His duty was to be with them.

"I am going, Socrates," he said, bending over Williams and removing his weapons. "But what can we do with this man?"

"Oh, leave him alone; his own men will come back to him if they escape. I will join you and fight with you to the last if I cannot kill Tick-tick Tommy at once. He will be difficult to meet, for doubtless he'll expect me if he

knows I am not dead, and he'll be surrounded by all the warriors of his own people left alive and all those of my people who have felt my rule to be strict. Go away now, I will follow you later."

Harry went. The long subterranean passage now had no horrors for him, and he rushed on, blinded with perspiration, and heedless of the cries of the flying creatures, and of the eels he trod underfoot. Dead warriors lay across his path in numbers, which spoke eloquently of the fierceness of the running fight which had been kept up during the journey through the mountain, and the lad shuddered to think that often he had lent his aid in support of those who had shouted "Socrates!" as their war-cry. In time he reached the dark, sullen river, but without a pause he plunged into its icy waters and swam across. A few minutes later he burst out on to the ledge by the pool, shouting loudly to his comrades.

But no answer greeted him, and he gazed around blankly, but with a suddenly chilled heart. The blazing sun was pouring its terrific tropical rays straight down through the water-curtain into the pool, and he seemed to be

standing in the heart of a rainbow. But his comrades were not there, and his eyes were unseeing so far as beautiful effects were concerned. He groaned aloud and looked down into the pool.

"I am mad!" he exclaimed. "The curse of Urar has fallen on me. There is no pool there. Only dead bodies, squirming eels or devils, and some metallic-like images occupy the place where it was."

Then he remembered that they had intended to empty the pool and realised that his syphoning scheme had proved a success. The great swirling body of waters had departed for ever, and now a black basin of rock, in which lay objects which, to look upon, made him sick, was screened from the outer world by the falling waters.

"There are the old idols of the Okapites," he murmured. "Oh, how I wish I had never heard of them! How can I hope to find my lost brother, now alone and friendless but for Socrates?"

He carefully lowered himself into the damp hollow where the pool had been, and sat down amidst his gruesome surroundings, and stared at the precious images. He cared not what

would happen to him, and the fact that the *Electra* was a safe haven never occurred to his throbbing brain. He became lost in sad reflection, and time passed unheeded. Suddenly, however, his senses were electrified into alertness again, and at once he was as cool and ready for emergencies as he had ever been. A man was on the ledge above and he was speaking wildly. Harry looked up. The man was Woods, and he was covered with blood from head to foot.

"Where are you, Captain?" he was shouting. "We alone are left alive. The natives are mad, and are killing everything with a white skin. Clancy and some of the boys tried to cut out the trading-ship, but it was no good, and the traders are going under too—— Ah!" He paused, and peered down into the huge, cup-shaped depression, and a strange expression came over his bleeding face. "It is the treasure of Urar that I see!" he shrieked, "and it is all mine. I alone came out of that massacre alive, and even the Captain has gone to answer for his sins."

He scrambled down among the bodies, and crawled over to a hideous, grinning image made of pure gold. Harry sat still and watched

him. He was sick of bloodshed, but he was ready to shoot the man at the slightest sign of recognition. But Woods' eyes saw only the treasure, and the boy quickly realised that fact.

"Shower down your curses now, Urar," chuckled Woods as he lifted the idol and staggered to the side with it. "You'll have to be quick too, for I'm in a hurry."

He climbed aloft for a rope, and coming down again, he hitched it round the golden god; and then, scaling the water-worn walls once more, hauled it up beside him. The lad below watched his every movement. He felt that something was about to happen.

"Mine! mine!" shrieked Woods, dancing round the image. "All are dead but me! Urar must be fighting for me. But I hear people coming through the passage! They mean to rob me! But they shan't, for Urar is mightier than mortals. Ah! it is Reid's ghost! Urar, protect your own!"

He yelled the last words at the highest pitch of his voice, and gathering the idol in his arms, he staggered across to the edge of the gorge, and with a loud laugh which echoed weirdly among the rocks, sprang over. The waters continued to sing merrily as they fell. Woods

was not the first man they had seen under Urar's spell.

Then Harry shouted for joy; Mr. Reid, Mr. Hobson, and Brown were standing on the ledge above. They all bore signs of having been in a most sanguinary fight; but Brown had a sack on his back, which Harry knew was filled with provisions. He knew Brown well.

And the emotions of the three men on beholding him were as deep and touching as his own. Mr. Reid reached over, and assisted him on to the ledge.

"Oh, laddie!" he murmured, "I thought Urar had claimed you even as he has just taken poor Woods. We have been looking for you everywhere, and I dinna like to think how many heads I cracked in the business."

"Don't worry over that, sir," said Mr. Hobson. "A native's head will mend even although it is cracked, and if we hadn't gone down to the village after the gang they would have joined with the combined natives, and come here and wiped us out. Now we know that we are safe so far as Williams' men are concerned, and we'll haul up those ugly old idols and get away."

"But where is Socrates?" asked Harry. "He

left me to go down to try to bring his warriors to reason."

"He might as well try to stop the water from falling," Mr. Hobson answered. "We saw him fighting about half a hundred, and I know Tick-tick Tommy will never smile again. But where did you go, Harry?"

"After Socrates. Williams' gang carried him away. I rescued him and came back here, but you had gone, and then Woods came along——"

"And answered Urar's call," finished Mr. Reid. "We saw him. Surely the curse is removed from these gods now. Harry, my boy, I feel I must tell you something now, perhaps I'm destined to be the next victim of the curse. Listen, lads, and see that justice is done afterwards if—if I go over into the gorge——"

"I'm mighty well sure you won't," said Brown, "unless you take me with you."

Harry and Mr. Hobson were silent. They felt that Mr. Reid had deeper reasons for his words than they knew.

"Many wandering traders and prospectors have tried to find these cursed images, boys," Mr. Reid began. "For there are many stories of their fabulous wealth current throughout the Pacific. But so far as I know only two

ever saw them. These two were mates, and either one would have readily given his life for the other. They were wealthy in a way, for they had been lucky in many ventures, and when they decided to make a try for the treasure of the Okapites they purchased a new steamer in Sydney, and came here. But a band of old enemies of theirs was also on the same mission, and, not able themselves to beat the two prospectors, raised the natives under the chief Nogood, since known as Tick-tick Tommy, against them. Well, a fight took place, vera like the one that took place to-day, in many ways, but it didn't end as the instigators expected. The natives when roused lose all reason, and this time they turned their hands against any white men they saw. The two prospectors escaped up to the temple ruins, and the leader of the other gang, a man known far and near as Kill-kill Frenchy, who was an escaped prisoner from New Caledonia, was killed by the chief. As a matter of fact, he was deserted by his lieutenant, who drew off the men and swam with them out to the steamer which belonged to the two prospectors. They, doubtless, persuaded the crew on board to join their band, and they sailed away. I may say

here that that lieutenant was Williams. Their own boat was left, however, an ordinary trading-schooner, and our two friends took possession of it and went on with their search, for the natives were now calmed down again, and afraid of what might happen to them if a German cruiser came along. Well, the two men found the long lost passage through the mountain while exploring among the temple ruins, and they came here and saw those idols down there lying on this ledge. But as soon as they had the great treasure within reach they lost all desire for it; they were already wealthy men, as I have said, and it was the adventurous life they really loved. Each told the other he could have the treasure, and finally, they agreed that they would give it all to a relative one had who might use the wealth to advantage. Both men knew the story about the curse of Urar falling upon him who profaned the idols with his touch, but, of course, they thought little of that. They approached the great chunks of metal to carry away what they could, and then—and then, the curse of Urar fell——"

Mr. Reid's voice broke here, and he ceased speaking for a time. He was much affected,

and even Brown felt that it was more than the story of two unknown prospectors the Scot was telling.

After a spell of silence, Mr. Reid continued:

"One of the men was seized from behind by the other, and thrown down on this ledge where I am now standing. He had been half strangled by his comrade in a sudden fit of madness. It was a long time before he recovered, and, drenched with spray and weak as a child, he crawled into the darkness, and with a last effort climbed to that ledge over there. His dear comrade had gone he knew not where. The effort of pulling himself up to the ledge had exhausted him, however, and he collapsed again. Some time about midnight he opened his eyes again, now much refreshed by what must have been a natural sleep. The sight he then saw drove him practically mad for a time too. His comrade was standing by the seething water which until recently filled this hole, as you know, crying out to Urar: 'I am as young as he was, and my blood as fresh. Take me in his stead!' He guessed what he meant to do, and cried out to him, but his comrade did not hear, and even as he looked, threw himself headlong into the pool——"

"Ghosts, bunyips, kelpies, and banshees!" gasped Brown. "Let us clear out of this place, boys. We'll be pitching ourselves into the gorge the same as Woods did directly——"

"The watcher jumped down from his resting-place," continued Mr. Reid, "and rushed to throw himself in after his comrade, but he stopped in time, and considered that he would be fulfilling a nobler duty to his dead friend by looking for the relative he had mentioned, and bringing him to the treasure. That is all the story, boys. I——"

"Ha! ha! Urar, I defy you! I shall handle your cursed gods in spite of you and your devils."

The speaker, a gory mass of humanity, ran out through the rock-cleft on to the ledge. A fusillade of revolver shots followed him, but he did not seem to mind, although he was already shot in several places. He stood on the edge of the hole, and looked down at the heap of bodies and the precious images:

"At last all are mine!" he cried. "Not one lives who can question my right to them."

"Great New York!" cried Mr. Hobson. "That's Williams! He's as mad as a half-boiled nigger!"

"Who is following him?" asked Harry. "I am sure it can't be Socrates."

"All are dead, dead as your gods, great Urar!" cried Williams. "Now send along your curses, for I'm going to rob you."

He prepared to leap down into the deep hollow, but a shout from behind made him turn round. A man ran towards him from the rock-cleft, also bearing signs of having come through a battle.

"Stand, you cowardly skunk, and fight!" the man roared. "Look at me! I'm not a ghost. I'm Gilson, the man you betrayed——"

"Oh, I know you; you are the Glasgow banknote forger, but you are dead. You are one of Urar's devils, and you can't keep me from taking those treasures. Why, even the waters have left the pool so that I might get them."

"You madman; your time of life is up; you'll never touch those idols. I am the avenger of those whom you sold in Glasgow. To me they look to take your life——"

"But you cannot be alive," said Williams strangely. "You were caught too——"

"Yes, but not the way you intended, and I escaped. You will remember that I was always

good at getting out of unpleasant company, and I came here after you to kill you, by P. and O. to Singapore, thence on a German trader which got in here just before the typhoon burst. Now, you see, you cannot escape, and I'll kill you with intense pleasure, and take the treasure myself——"

"Liar!" roared Williams, hurling himself at Gilson. "You'll go to Urar like all others who think they can check me. Don't you hear the Moon God calling? Come!"

The two men were now locked in deadly embrace, and they swayed and struggled, one with the strength of madness, the other with a ferocious hatred which, likewise, shut out all reason. Neither of them saw the little group of watchers standing at the opposite side of the ledge, and it is not likely that they would have cared if they had.

"They'll both go over into the gorge!" cried Harry. "Can we not save them?"

"Yes, by shooting them," said Mr. Hobson, "but no other way. Urar is having the time of his life at present. He is working overtime too."

"I'll back old Williams yet," cried Brown. "He hasn't much blood left in his carcase,

but he's still more than a match for the other fellow."

And for a moment it seemed that Brown was correct in his surmise. Williams was much the stronger of the two, and he bent Gilson's back over until it was just on the point of breaking. But Gilson threw up his feet, and thus relieved the awful strain, and while held in the arms of his opponent, plunged a knife into his body again and again. The ledge was red with the life-fluid, and Harry shuddered. Williams' eyes were becoming glazed, but he appeared to be past all feeling: "Come!" he gasped, carrying his clinging burden to the edge of the gorge. "Don't you hear Urar calling? Go to him!" He bent with Gilson over the rocks until the latter was hidden in the falling waters, but the man still clung to Williams, and with a cry which reverberated down the ravine, and hung lingeringly after the tragedy had been enacted, both men disappeared from sight. Truly Urar's call could not be resisted.

The witnesses remained silent for a minute, then Mr. Hobson spoke.

"It is high time we were away from this place," he said. "I'll hear that cry ringing in my ears until I am called myself."

"It had to be," Mr. Reid responded. "Even on earth man must pay for his sins; but what life has been lost over those lumps o' metal!——"

"Hullo! here is Schnake, and he's got the boys with him," cried Brown. "I'm mighty glad to see them too, for I am sure Brown would be the next to go to Urar if we stayed here alone."

"I vas come to look for you," the German cried as he appeared on the ledge above. "Ve could not longer vait on de sheep vithout knowing vat had become of you. I vas sorry to disobey orders, sir, but I can't help it."

"Perhaps it is well for us you did come here even against orders, Mr. Schnake," said Mr. Reid. "We've come through a good lot since we saw you last; but we'll tell you later——"

"Yes," gasped a voice from the rock-cleft. "Haul up the treasure quick, and get away; the curse is now removed. Urar is satisfied. Socrates goes to him——" The chief staggered out on to the ledge and fell at Harry's feet. He was faint from loss of blood. "Never mind me, my young brother," he murmured, as Harry dropped on his knees beside him. "Take the treasure and leave this island——"

"Not without you, Socrates," Harry answered, beginning to dress the wounds all over his naked body. "You'll come with us when we go, and live happily in some pleasant country where you will not need to fight every day. Mr. Reid and I will be near you after I find my brother."

Socrates smiled and closed his eyes.

"He is dead!" Harry cried. "Oh, we have lost our best friend——"

"He's only sleeping, laddie," said Mr. Reid, bending over the chief. "He's exhausted—probably he hasn't slept for about a week; bandage up his wounds, and we'll haul up the idols."

And while the men erected slings and hoisting apparatus, the chief slept, and Harry bathed and bandaged him, using the shirts of all the men for the purpose.

The afternoon sun was now shining directly into the ravine, and under its genial influence the spirits of all rose considerably, and they gave no thought to Urar or his curses. Soon the hideous, but extremely valuable, monstrosities lay on the ledge, all but the god Woods had taken with him. Each weighed over a hundredweight, and was composed of gold,

osmiridium, or some other rare metal, and precious stones of many varieties, but which certainly did not now exist on any Pacific Island, were lavishly inlaid over their bodies.

The islands whence they came were, doubtless, long since submerged, and in the see-saw of lands which is ever in motion in the Pacific the present islands had taken their places.

The men worked with a will, for they had no desire to be in the uncanny place after sundown, and by means of ropes and an expenditure of much strength they at length hauled the idols up to and along the ledge which led to the tunnel. They made several journeys from the old pool to the system of ropes and pulleys connecting with the far end of the tunnel and the *Electra's* deck, but at last the gods were all lowered to the ship without accident, and the men returned with a stretcher for Socrates. Harry had sat by him all the time.

"And you will still help me to find my brother?" the lad said wistfully to Mr. Reid, after he had been told that the treasure was safely on board the steamer.

"Harry, laddie," cried the Scot appealingly.

"Couldn't you guess when I told you that story? Your brother and I were mates. It was for you I came to Glasgow. I—I am the man who escaped——"

"And my brother was in that pool then?" said Harry dazedly. "No, it cannot be; my brother's comrade was called Jim Fraser——"

"Which is my name, laddie. I only adopted the use of my middle name in Glasgow, for reasons you well know. Oh, Harry, don't blame me. I worked for you and you alone——" The Scot broke down, and the men turned away their heads. Mr. Hobson and Brown saw the whole story in a flash, but they could find no words to utter.

"Speak, Harry!" implored the weather-beaten Scot; "the treasure is yours, and——"

"What do I want with treasure?" moaned the lad. "My brother is dead!"

Socrates muttered something in his sleep, and Mr. Reid was down beside him instantly.

"My God!" the Scot gasped. "Surely I'm no' mad too."

He frantically removed one of the chief's blood-stained bandages, then he leaped to his feet and yelled out some incoherent words. Next moment he was on his knees in devotional

attitude, but the men heard not his fervent prayer. It was not to Urar he prayed, however.

"He has gone mad too," ejaculated Brown. "Come away, Harry; I'll be your brother now, and with old Socrates you'll pull along."

But Harry was staring from Mr. Reid to the awaking chief, and he did not hear Brown.

"Your brother is alive, laddie! He's alive!" Mr. Reid shouted, rolling over beside Socrates again. "The God of our fathers is good! No, I'm no' mad—the blood has washed his skin white!"

Socrates sat up and looked around wonderingly.

"Jim," he said to Mr. Reid, and his voice was changed greatly. "I wish we had cleared out of this place before sundown. I've had a horrible dream. Where's the treasure?"

Mr. Reid signed to the men to show no surprise, and his glance at Harry was eloquent as many volumes.

"The treasure is safe on our steamer, Jack," he said soothingly. "We recaptured it, you know. But what was your dream?"

"Oh, it was horrible. I dreamt Urar's curse had fallen on me, and that I killed you and

jumped into the pool after throwing all the idols in too. But Urar didn't want me, for he threw me up on the ledge again, and told me to act as his chief. Then I dyed my skin and went down and fought Tick-tick Tommy, and became chief of the islanders. But my young brother seemed to be with me towards the end. We'll hunt him up, Jim. Hullo! my skin *is* black! And what am I doing in native garb? Jim! what has happened?"

"Nothing much, Jack. But your brother is here. I met him—I mean, he came here on his own account, and——"

"Harry!" cried the chief, as the lad stood before him, "how did you get here? You are just exactly as I saw you in my dream——"

"Rule, Britannia! God Save the King, and Harry, and his brother Socrates for ever!" yelled Brown, and as the truth dawned on the others a cheer went up that threatened to bring the rocks down about their ears.

* * * * *

That night the *Electra* was sailing smoothly over the gently-lapping waters of the Pacific. There was a fortune for each man on board; but as Jack Wilmot, dressed in one of his old comrade's white flannel suits, Jim Reid

Fraser, and Harry gazed at the dark island of the Okapites now fading into darkness over the stern, they felt that in the possession of each other they each had treasures compared to which those of the ancient Okapites were as nothing.

"Well, Jim, where shall we go for our next adventure?" said Jack, lighting a cigar. "We must show Harry a bit of the world, and how people live—and die. Hang that dream of mine! I can't get it out of my mind."

"We'll arrange our next trip later, Jack," his comrade answered. "But Harry has already seen more of the world, and the customs of some of its peoples, than you think. Do you know, Jack"—the Scot spoke slowly and watched his comrade's face—"it is over six months since we found Urar's treasure. That dream of yours was true."

The Gresham Press,
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED,
WOKING AND LONDON

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